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HALF A CENTURY

OR

CHANGES IN MEN AND MANNERS

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BY

ALEX. INNES SHAND

AUTHOR OF

'LETTERS FROM WEST IRELAND,' 'FORTUNE'S WHEEL,' ETC.

SECOND EDITION

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N O T E.

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CHAPTER I.

A TIME OF PROGRESS.

IN the life of a nation or in the annals of the world, half a century may go for next to nothing, or it may be pregnant with promise and achievement. In the infancy of civilisation, with its miracles of stupendous architecture, progress was so slow as to be wellnigh imperceptible. The Tower of Babel was the beginning of public works, which have left their memorials in the colossal monuments of the Egyptian dynasties. Apparently proportioned to the intolerable length of patriarchal lives, they show that time was as little valued as human effort. The ephemeral

empires of the East, the tiny Greek republics, or the military world-power of all-absorbing Rome, merely refined on the arts, or perfected the organisation of their predecessors, as they moved onwards in the familiar grooves. The troubled sleep of the middle ages, broken by a monotony of hideous nightmares, was but the repose of an inevitable reaction when the shock of the barbarians had paralysed the old forms of activity. The systems of society had been subverted; the brutality of force was again in the ascendant; knowledge was proscribed, for men of learning were martyred if they had not the fortune to find powerful protectors; and from the palace to the hovel, from the king to the serf, there was a long and unceasing struggle for existence. In Europe, through that dark and dreary night, the Church was the sole safeguard of the oppressed, as she was the last refuge for the thinker with some tincture of letters. But the Church had renounced or neglected her mission before the structures her corruptions had sapped were shaken by the zeal of a Hildebrand. Then came the Renaissance and the Reformation, with the promise of release of life and thought, animating the manifold gifts and aspirations which ever since have been multiplying and directing themselves into fresh channels. Since the dawn of the Renaissance the world has been

moving, though the lights broke slowly through the utter darkness, and it was hard at first to overcome the inveterate *vis inertiae*. But in the last fifty or sixty years—for a few years more or less count for nothing in the circumstances—the pace has become unparalleled, as it has been steadily increasing in something like geometrical progression.

The gains and material advances in the last sixty years of English life have been immense ; the accumulations of capital have been simply unprecedented, while credit has practically had *carte blanche* ; we have been sending out our surplus population to people continents and territories ; science and invention, stimulated by great prizes, have been anticipating our needs, and ministering to our social conveniences. The art of living agreeably has been cultivated. The doctors, with their discoveries and the sanitary measures they suggest, have been getting the better of epidemics, and holding death at bay ; the increase in riches, with the diffusion of comfort, has been more broadly distributed than is generally believed ; and, in short, there can be little question that the world in general has good cause for congratulation. It is impossible to realise the blank desolation of the social eclipse were the hands of the clock of progress to be put back for half a century. Yet the world in

general must lament over wasted opportunities. Nations that were isolated before have been brought into close and continual contact. Their pulses are perpetually throbbing in mechanical unison through a sensitive network of electrical wires. Unhappily the harmony is merely mechanical, and the reign of universal peace and goodwill seems as far removed from us as ever. As for England, with which we are more nearly concerned, we only know that the eventful era of which I write has seen our departure in new and unfamiliar ways, with the extinction of our most cherished political traditions. The Constitution, which had been the slow growth of ripe experience, which had stood the double test of time and trials, under which the country had grown rich and populous, while the home islands had expanded into a vast foreign empire, has been radically modified, if not absolutely revolutionised, by a double transfer of political power. Measures that were precipitated by imaginary party exigencies might have been inevitable sooner or later; all the same, it remains to be seen how far they may answer the expectations of their sanguine authors, or falsify the prognostications of more cautious patriots. The old maxim as to not disturbing what is quiet will suggest itself to conservative minds without distinction of party. We hope the best, and are

inclined to believe it; for we have faith in British luck as in the sterling sense of the people. But the stakes in this new departure are so momentous, that we may well await with anxiety the solution of critical problems.

Dismissing these vital constitutional considerations, it is more agreeable at the commencement of a review of the reign to turn to the position and capabilities of our country. We may safely say that in the last fifty or sixty years England has become relatively a more formidable Power to reckon with than when, subsidising the allies that abandoned her on their defeats, she maintained the tremendous and exhausting struggle that exiled Napoleon to St Helena. The increase of her wealth, of her industries and her commerce, has been enormous, as her population has wellnigh doubled itself, notwithstanding incessant emigration. In spite of the chronic complaints of the working classes, who have been striking against wages that would have seemed wealth to their fathers, all men who are willing to work have had their share in the growing prosperity. The emigration, far from draining the veins of the mother country, has relieved the congestion that found vent in social disturbances more dangerous than any we have lately had to deal with. It has been peopling new dominions beyond the seas with men of one blood, language,

and religion, who are bound to us by common interests and sympathies. There has been a heavy fall in Irish rents, and the new attitude of English Radicals has complicated the political question ; otherwise, Ireland is very much as she was, as may be seen by consulting the journals of fifty years ago, while the discontented population has been enormously reduced. India has been consolidated by annexation or conciliation ; the great feudatories enclosed in their semi-independence in British territory have more enlightened ideas as to the wisdom of loyalty ; the wild and warlike elements in the population are betaking themselves to peaceful work ; and now we rule a united empire isolated or fortified within a ring-fence by the seas, the Himalayas, and the frontier of the Indus. Unfriendly foreign critics are fond of sneering at our growing impotence, of ridiculing our involuntary self-abnegation in European affairs, of predicting our decline to the second rank of States. They fail to remember, or choose to forget, that our abnegation has been very much a matter of choice, and that we are saving the money which is the sinews of war, while Continental nations are spending. As we indulge ourselves in exemption from conscription, we can no longer put great standing armies in the field, as, relying too entirely on our insular security, we may have

been retrenching imprudently on the expenditure in fortifications and war-ships. But the men are there, so is the money ; and the fact remains that we have resources and reserves such as no rival European Power possesses. Should the necessity arise, which God forbid, we have always that Continental conscription to fall back upon ; and, were the emergency sufficiently serious, the country might clamour for conscription. Short of that, whether in England or India, or even in the Colonies, recruiting is a mere matter of pay. In her Majesty's wide dominions we have the finest fighting material in the world, for service anywhere between the equator and the poles. Money would be forthcoming to float flying squadrons of the more handy ships and the lighter craft of the future, arming them with the war material we could turn out in perfection. Money would be found to make the fortresses and harbours practically impregnable, with which we lay an iron grasp on the ocean routes, from the Cape to Hong Kong, and from Gibraltar to the Bermudas. If we will only waken up to take due precautions against surprise, we may safely trust our honour to time and Providence. It has hitherto, perhaps, been a more serious matter that, owing to our Constitution being so absolutely free, the country should have been frequently changing its Ministries, which un-

doubtedly is unfavourable to permanent alliances. But there are signs already that the enlarged constituencies are inclining to a continuity of policy at the Foreign Office; while, for better or for worse, it becomes abundantly clear that democracy is drifting towards political dictatorships. The only nation that can rival or outstrip us is the huge American Republic; and, fortunately, our kinsmen beyond the seas are bound over to keep the peace for the best of reasons, and they fritter few of their dollars away either in formidable fleets or land forces.

Patriots on the whole may be reassured, though pessimism is only too popular; while as for the changes which have been improving our material and social condition, it is as difficult to appreciate as it is impossible to deny them. Those everyday comforts of which our fathers never dreamed are become either cheaply attainable luxuries, or are considered bare necessities of existence; and we are so used to our accumulating blessings, that we have never been seriously grateful for them. If we hold to life, the death-rate has been going down and the life-span has been very appreciably lengthened—which infers, of course, a proportionate relief from disease, with an increase of keen enjoyment and the pleasures of vigorous existence. We inhabit tolerably healthy cities, with public recreation-grounds

and breathing-room ; and we live in better-built houses with any number of untaxed windows, for which we can afford to pay higher rents. Sub-urban railways economise time and contract space, so far as the city toilers are concerned ; and even clerks and artisans on modest salaries may house their families in fresh country air, with easy access to the fields and the flowers ; while the international railway system has brought quick locomotion within the reach of everybody according to their means. The "grand tour" used to be the monopoly of the privileged few—a costly preliminary education for politics, diplomacy, or idleness. Now the busiest capitalist can snatch time in a brief holiday to make a flying trip to America, India, and the antipodes, as the hard-working and humble Londoner, for the small sum of three-and-sixpence, may enjoy a summer day on the shores of the Channel. Formerly the many to whom pennies were of consequence had to content themselves with a chance and occasional glance at the costly news-sheets which gave belated news. Knowing little of what was going on, they cared less. A practically prohibitory rate of postage cut them off from communication with their friends. Whereas now the showers of penny and halfpenny journals keep everybody as thoroughly posted up in the affairs of the world as any professional politician, while the

penny stamp has proved an inestimable boon to the poor who set a value on family ties.

It may be said that we have been speaking chiefly of the fairly well to do, and that the working classes have been comparatively neglected, while their social superiors were being enriched. Nor do we deny that much may still remain to be done for the industrious poor, but even in the meantime they have little reason to be discontented. Our soldiers and sailors have higher pay and shorter service, with sure promotion as the reward of good conduct and satisfactory pensions in prospect. Our merchant seamen—and I shall touch afterwards on their grievances—are nevertheless navigating more brilliantly lighted seas, with lifeboats to be launched for their rescue at each dangerous point along our coasts. Although the Government inspectors may be occasionally negligent or indifferent, there are official regulations with regard to their fare. Our artisans have leagued themselves in such formidable trade-unions, that they have often dictated terms to powerful combinations of capitalists. Our factory hands work for better wages, though shorter hours, under efficient protection. A similar *surveillance* extends to mines; casualties are far fewer than formerly; while legislation is ever on the watch to assure additional safeguards. Even the lot of the comparatively helpless agricultural labourer

has been marvellously ameliorated ; witness the rate of wages and the way of living in the south-western counties, where his condition was once a scandal to humanity. As for education, we are absolutely forcing it upon everybody, sorely against the will of the relatives of the ungrateful victims.

I have been glancing at the brighter side of things, I confess, and I shall have something to say as to the dark corners and the shadows. In an old country like our own, there must always be grievances ; and at this moment apparently it is the landed aristocracy, the farmers, the yeomen, and their labouring dependants, who have the gravest cause for apprehension. But public opinion is awake, and is directing the forces of legislation. Liberality is still a British virtue. Reformers and philanthropists are only at the beginning of a series of labours the importance of which is universally recognised. The poor and the vicious will be always with us ; and though very much has been done for them already, much remains to be done. We shall have troubles abroad and anxieties at home, and it must be our care to take precautions against the one and the other. But our ever-increasing activity and prosperity in the past is of the happiest omen for our progress in the future ; and though we must reckon with the uncertainty of all mortal things, assuredly there are no signs as yet of national decay.

CHAPTER II.

THE SWING OF THE PENDULUM.

WITHOUT self-flattery, we may safely say that the growth and development of the British Constitution is the best tribute to the qualities of the British nation. By fostering free institutions, they have proved their capacity for self-government. I need not trace the Constitution to its sources in the free and popular Witenagemot of the Saxons, go back to the recognition of representative "knights of the shire" by the masterful Conqueror, or revert to the first probable summonses to representatives of the boroughs for the memorable Parliament of Simon de Montfort. It is enough to call attention to what Hallam describes as the expansive energy of our national legislation ; to note the ever-increasing force of public opinion, which steadily assured the privileges it had won by indefatigable efforts. In the times of the Tudors the Parliaments were distinctly less free

than they had been under the most domineering of the warlike Plantagenets. Henry VIII. did not hesitate to appear in person at the critical debates of his "faithful Commons," and his most patriotic counsellors were compelled to choose between carrying out his designs or losing their places or their heads. But even the Tudors, in the plenitude of popularity and power, never pushed personal interference beyond a certain point. They kept touch with the feelings of a formidable popular Opposition, and they had the quick political tact in which Charles I. was lamentably lacking. The measures of the Long Parliament more than vindicated the independence of its members. With the exception of the Bill of Rights, the Revolution Settlement rather concerned itself with securing stronger guarantees than with introducing essential changes.

In fact, down to the short reign of William IV., the development of the Constitution had been gradual and tentative. The constitutional system had worked so well on the whole, that the people were fairly satisfied. The dullest could see that, in spite of excessive drains for war expenditure, the country had been rapidly advancing in prosperity; while the wars which increased taxation and ran up the price of bread had greatly enriched influential classes. The farmers, selling their grain at almost fabulous prices, made for-

tunes, notwithstanding the rise in rents. The manufacturers profited by Protection, and the mills and factories were frequently busy, notwithstanding the "Orders in Council" and the closing of the Continental ports. The general impoverishment and distress which succeeded to that period of forced and fictitious prosperity set the mind of the nation seething. The burdensome war debts remained, but the tax-paying powers of the population were grievously diminished. The farmers who had habituated themselves to more luxurious ways of living had still to pay the higher rents, although wheat and stock had been falling. Yet the Corn-laws kept up the price of the loaf, while wages had been diminishing towards starvation-point both in the manufacturing and agricultural districts. Men who would willingly have worked were thrown out of employment, while the many who were naturally indolent or vicious took kindly to beggary or crime. Yet all the time the nation had been somewhat advancing in education, and ignorance was just sufficiently enlightened to lend a ready ear to plausible oratory. Then came the natural consequences, for better or worse. The suffering was obvious. There were class grievances, real and imaginary, to be redressed; and the field was thrown open to large-minded reformers, as to agitators of all sorts,

with their infallible specifics. Some of these reformers were clear-sighted statesmen who saw into futurity, and sought to anticipate demands that were just and inevitable. Not a few were unscrupulous knaves and self-seekers, who advocated claims that were absurd or outrageous, and threw oil upon the fire for their selfish purposes. In any case, the times were ripe for sweeping and almost subversive changes; and in the irony of history the political revolution began in the reign of a good-humoured monarch who was indifferent as Gallio to all these things, till he began to realise and resent encroachments on his royal prerogative. The shock to the vested interests of the moneyed classes was rude, but perhaps it was the conscientious and well-meaning King who suffered most keenly in the envenomed Reform struggle.

When the King came to the throne, notwithstanding those chronic convulsions among the lower orders which had been aggravated by exceptional circumstances, everything seemed to Conservatives to be for the best, on the whole, in the best of practicable worlds. The Crown, the Court, the landed aristocracy, and the commercial capitalists had good reason to be satisfied. They returned the representatives who governed the country, and could rely on commanding majorities upon all the questions which

affected them. At the same time, whether they acted on personal or public grounds, it cannot be said that they deliberately abused their power. Though England might submit to the rule of a "Venetian oligarchy," public opinion had always asserted its rights, and the voice of the people had made itself heard under essentially aristocratic administration. Parliamentary leaders were in the habit, like the Tudors, of keeping a finger on the popular pulse; and if they neglected or misconstrued the symptoms, they had invariably cause for regret. The difference now was that their hands were forced, and with a suddenness that came as a surprise. Not that the question of Parliamentary Reform was a new one: it had been taken up by the elder and the younger Pitt; but hitherto it had been speculatively debated and lightly dismissed, since there was but slight pressure on the Houses of Parliament. By this time, however, popular discontent had been gathering and fermenting. What was more important, it had found definite and eloquent expression through men like Lords Grey and Althorp, who were grave and experienced politicians, whose station was as high as their patriotism was unimpeachable. Even such great borough-holders as Lords Fitz-William and Darlington had been converted. The Tories might differ from them widely, but they could not

denounce them as revolutionists. The old Whigs were placing themselves at the head of the new Radicals, with the determination of settling the question they had raised, and with the resolution of directing a movement that might become dangerous. Thenceforward a thoroughgoing Reform Bill had become inevitable: it was but a question, first of the time, and secondly, of the settlement of its limits; while a power that had been springing up between the people and their so-called representatives threw its formidable influence into the scales with the reformers. A free press had been growing up with the spread of free speech; and while agitators were "orating" on hundreds of provincial platforms, no fewer than ten out of the thirteen metropolitan papers reported their speeches at length, and backed up their arguments in leaders.

There can be no question that with the passing of the first Reform Bill the political pendulum swung towards its centre of gravity. The great middle class, which had been rapidly increasing in wealth, intelligence, and numbers, had hitherto had no fair share in the national representation. Men who largely contributed to the taxes had small concern in voting them; while it was matter of even more importance that they had as little to say on the imposts which affected their business. Great manufac-

turing cities sent no members to Westminster; boroughs with no constituents were represented by a couple of members. The glaring abuse had been rectified to a certain extent by sale and purchase in open market: the manufacturer who had made a fortune could always buy a seat, as wealthy West Indians and nabobs from Hindustan would sit for colonial and Indian interests. The old system was defended by plausible arguments, though it is noteworthy that all these arguments were urged on behalf of the richer and more influential classes. Even the most rotten of rotten boroughs were defended on pleas which were not without force, and which have in some measure justified the forebodings of their advocates. The Gattons and Old Sarums offered openings to ambitious young men who had neither the means nor the name for contesting extensive constituencies; and, moreover, they served as refuges for statesmen of eminence who had been rejected elsewhere by public caprice. Such arguments were urged in vain by the defenders of a desperate cause, who felt they were foredoomed to failure. The wiser and most moderate of the Tories would gladly have conceded much to delay indefinitely the radical innovations which they believed to be fraught with infinite danger. We find even a thoroughgoing, though somewhat short-sighted,

partisan like Croker, writing to Peel to urge him to resist Reform as a principle, while conceding in prudence the minor proposals of the measure. But the time had gone by for satisfying an excited democracy with concessions and partial sops; the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill, received the reluctant approval of the King and the Upper Chamber. As for the "nothing but the Bill," that was absurd; it should have been plain that there could be no such thing as finality in Reform till it had touched the bottom of universal suffrage. That sure presentiment of the clear-sighted went far to justify the obstructive opposition conscientiously offered to the Bill by many who had no personal interest in maintaining venerable abuses. Meanwhile, however, the Whig chiefs of the Cabinet, putting a drag on the movement they dared not arrest, guarded, so far as was practicable, the interests of the aristocracy and landowners. Boroughs with less than two thousand inhabitants might be disfranchised; boroughs with fewer than four thousand might cease to return two members; the franchise might be conferred on the vigorous manufacturing cities, which could not fail to exercise an increasing influence in Parliament; but at the same time, the petty county towns had still retained a most disproportionate influence, while no less than sixty-

five of the vacated seats were transferred to the counties and preserved to the agricultural interest. Yet it was roughly estimated that 135 seats were lost by the landed aristocracy to the middle classes, though calculations of the kind are difficult of verification.

Whatever the nature of the changes or the apparent value of the safeguards, the Bill in its consequences, if not in its inception, proved essentially revolutionary. It not only revolutionised the constitution, but the fundamental conditions, of the English social system. It gave an inevitable impulse to subsequent reforms, originating in the long-suppressed aspirations of the middle classes, and it split existing parties into sections, owing to the necessity of conciliating the new constituencies. The Corporation Act, for example, could never have been so quickly carried; the Corn-law agitation, which was to impoverish the landed interest, and deprive it even of indirect political power, would never have succeeded so thoroughly had they not been supported by votes as well as argument. It is true that in the last fifty-four years the Premiers, with three notable exceptions, have been either peers or aristocrats. It is true that men of rank or of high connections have invariably formed the majority in the Cabinets; nevertheless, in place of governing as they used to do, statesmen,

like the well-disciplined saints of Milton, have been learning, though unwillingly, to *serve* and wait.

The men who were most overbearing with their colleagues, and even with the Crown, still figured on the platforms and the hustings as Ministers who accepted their mission from the people. The capitalists and craftsmen of the manufacturing and industrial counties, realising their possible power, organised their strength with the resolution of increasing it. Birmingham and Manchester were courted and consulted, though the ideas of those flourishing communities could scarcely be supposed to be disinterested; while the views of our ancient seats of learning, and of the men of intellect, leisure, and means, who had the misfortune to have been educated in their colleges, came to be regarded as “academical and unpractical.” Does any one believe that the late Lord Derby would ever have hazarded the famous “leap in the dark,” had he not been spurred forward by the pushing leaders of the industrial classes, and by the apprehension of alienating future constituents? Yet, after all, Lord Derby only decided to precipitate what could not, in the course of things, have been indefinitely delayed. Each reduction of the franchise leads down necessarily to another, till we touch manhood suffrage pure and simple;

and then we shall begin to take into practical consideration the claims of women and children, and of lunatics in their lucid intervals. We should have said that the middle classes had overreached themselves in giving the last violent impulse to the pendulum, were it not that, like the concessions of Conservative Ministers, the latest Radical Reform Bill was merely a question of time. By logically involving the lowering of the franchise beyond St George's Channel, it has been the immediate cause of our burning Irish anxieties. It is impossible to predict what further may come of it. In any case, the democracy are our dictators now, and we can only hope they may show themselves self-denying and sagacious. They may be pacific, and devote their attention to domestic reforms; or they may be bellicose, as they may fancy, at the expense of the "capitalists," and throw the weight of their wars on the income-tax. Be that as it may, the signs are that we shall ultimately settle down under personal government by popular autocrats. It is to be hoped that their patriotism may justify the trust which the ignorant masses will blindly confide to their mandatories; or that Britain's proverbial luck may still pull the empire through its difficulties.

CHAPTER III.

FREE AND INDEPENDENT ELECTORS.

THE country may have gained by electoral reform, but various interests have suffered severely. It is certain that we pay dearly for purity, and sundry sorts and conditions of men have sad reason to complain. Formerly the few contributed to the welfare of the many; and a general election was a boon to all except the candidates who were to contest the seats. Money was set in free circulation from the highest down to the lowest. The nobles and great landowners who were branded as borough-mongers had an opportunity of replenishing the bankers' balances they had been draining for the benefit of trade. Bloated capitalists with a tendency to hoard were bled for the behoof of the needy community. The covetous were compelled to assume a virtue if they had it not; the grasping became generous, and misers turned spendthrifts. The barriers of

caste and class were broken down for the time, and the haughty candidate went hat in hand and cash in pocket to solicit the suffrages of the free and very independent. For in that golden age the strictly limited franchise was a sure source of profit as well as a privilege; and healthy political interests were stimulated when each elector was entered for pecuniary stakes. In Hull, for example, which was a relatively extensive constituency, the regulation price of a vote was a couple of guineas, while twice as much was paid for a plumper. There was an honourable understanding that the debts should stand over till the last day when any bribery petition could be presented. Yet the electors of Hull might envy their neighbours in the smaller boroughs with only a few scores of freeholders, where occasionally the recognised tariff was £100 per vote. In these the patriot deliberately weighed his decision while eloquent arguments were being urged alternately by the agents of the blue and the yellow. He smoked and drank and discussed the questions of the day to a sonorous and seductive chink of guineas in the back parlour of the busy public-house. As he staggered homewards enveloped in clouds of soothing tobacco, he was stealthily followed and accosted by smooth-spoken gentlemen with fair credentials in the shape of crisp bank-notes.

He might treat, as he was being "treated," on liberal terms; or he might hold over his vote like a load of wheat or a pocket of hops in the hope of a fancy price in a tightened market. In the Pactolean prospect of the election he had "run ticks" with the shopkeepers, and he was bound in honour to liquidate his liabilities. His wife was flattered, his pretty daughters were kissed; there were showers of bonnets and ribbons and female finery, and, in short, there was a general carnival of jollity, charity, and goodwill.

In those good old days there was no precipitation; everything was done with due deliberation, and the Constitution, like the early Christians, considered the poor. To say nothing of the long preliminary canvassing, the polls were kept open for fourteen days in England, and not unfrequently for a couple of months or more in Ireland. Throughout that merry fortnight there was free drinking for all; the unemployed and impecunious found light and pleasant occupation in acting as paid agents and canvassers. For it was worth while securing the support even of non-electors; and when clamorous crowds were to congregate round the hustings, much depended on the show of hands and the expressions of popular sympathy. Then in a hot fight for some great county, wheeled carriages of all

kinds were put in requisition to bring up outlying voters. Lord John Russell said in his famous Reform speech that the cost of a contested Yorkshire election averaged £150,000; and it was estimated that in the battle of 1817, the three parties had expended upwards of half a million. Everything was hired, from the mourning-coaches to the market-carts; even hearses carried the living in place of the dead, and all the seats in the through stage-coaches were booked by contract for a term. As the nomination day drew near, and the contest grew more critical, it must have been delightful to admirers of our institutions to witness the exuberant enthusiasm. After weeks of hard drinking and hot debate the minds of the voters were warmed up to fever-pitch. In the generous excitement, it must be confessed that breaches of the peace were not infrequent; but that was only anticipating the ideal of our own times, which demands deep political conviction before all things. There would often be a fierce free-fight before the hustings, when, with the beer and the bludgeons, the brickbats and the brass bands, there would be breaking of heads and shivering of window-panes. Those outbreaks of popular sentiment were punctiliously and chivalrously disavowed from either side of the hustings; yet there was something to be said for

them. For if platform oratory went for anything, they were all in favour of tried politicians who had been trained to stand fire. The hero of a score of fights who had justified the confidence of his party could address himself collectively to the reporters, if not to the mob; while the novice with little nerve for his new vocation, stammered, hesitated, and lost his head under showers of mud and volleys of promiscuous missiles. The scene at the show of hands was exciting; but there was sure to be a dramatic *dénouement* at the declaration of the poll. Then the pent-up feelings of the contending factions found vent, and the seething and shouting market place became a pandemonium. If the successful candidate chanced to be the unpopular one, he would prudently have retained a body-guard of pugilists, or surrounded himself with a sturdy volunteer corps of friendly farmers and yeomen. While ranged on the other side would be the gangs of roughs, primed in the public-houses and paid for the day, who were usually the friends of progress, peace, retrenchment, and purity. Veterans with nerves of iron, and ambitious lawyers with foreheads of brass, might delight in those great gladiatorial performances, and like them the better for the dash of danger. We may believe that Brougham positively revelled in the battles he fought in Yorkshire. But our

excellent Constitution, in its catholic tolerance, had considered the characters and feelings of more retiring men, who were modestly thoughtful of their immediate concerns, and content to record their silent votes. They could always be returned for a close borough, if they were willing to pay the price or swallow the pledges. Needy proprietors of parliamentary patronage, like Sir Pitt Crawley, sold a spare second seat without reserve, and so were some £1500 per annum in pocket; while wealthy peers who controlled a plurality of parliamentary interests, like the Lonsdales, the Hertfords, the Newcastles, &c., nominated their delegates as tenants at will, with a sure and certain faith in an absolute identity of opinion. There were exceptions, when from party or personal motives the lords paramount of the Lilliputian corporations "presented" some eminent politician who had been ousted elsewhere; but, as a rule, their representatives in the Commons were the echoes of their own voices in the Peers. Thus they had guarantees against the neglect of ungrateful Ministers, since, in the event of being forgotten for a vacant Garter or for the promised strawberry-leaves, they could sway the results on some critical division. And they could do a generous thing on occasion for an injured friend. Readers of 'Pelham' will remember how the

epicurean Lord Guloseton touched the heart of the cold and calculating hero by delicately placing half-a-dozen votes at his disposal when Pelham had been thrown over by his party. Yet, with all its obvious advantages, it must be confessed that there were points on which the old electoral *régime* was open to criticism. Tested by facts and statistics, objection might reasonably be taken to Gatton with its five constituents,—Lord Monson, by the way, paid £100,000 for the borough shortly before its disfranchisement,—to Buckingham and Malmesbury with thirteen, to Dunwich with eighteen, and Wareham with twenty-nine, each speaking with a double voice in the great National Council; while even in a university town like Oxford the constituency was limited to twenty “freemen,” who took their opinions and orders from the Marquess of Hertford. Leeds, Birmingham, and Manchester were still unrepresented, and there were fifteen small boroughs in Cornwall alone. It is to the credit of the governing caste that when these inconsistencies were forced on the notice of Parliament, it should have patriotically resigned itself to the inevitable. Even Lord Hertford wrote to Croker from his Parisian hermitage, previously to the passage of the Bill, that he would willingly sacrifice a part of his patronage to save the rest.

7207.

The passing of the Bill wrought wonderful changes. Though certain "safe" seats, like Calne, were providentially spared, there were wrecking and desolation in the south and south-west; while one of the most conspicuous effects of the measure was the curtailment of privileges, with the restrictions it imposed on personal liberty. Previously, absentee members were nearly as common as absentee Irish landlords. Men who sat for themselves or had paid for their places felt that naturally they could do as they pleased with their own. They lived abroad if they liked, and made it matter of favour or bargain when they were hurried home to be present at some vital division; whereas nowadays, each member is the slave of his constituents, and must turn night into day over intolerable drudgery which would revolt the most hardworking of hapless City clerks. But the Bill, being avowedly a popular measure, showed more consideration for the people than for members of the House. The enactments against bribery, bullying, and corruption were more honoured in the breach than the observance; and the most vivid sketches of our reformed electoral manners and customs are to be found in the novels of the last generation. Perhaps the most faithful and finished picture is Warren's story of the fight for Yatton in his 'Ten Thousand a-

Year.' Warren, no doubt, was a thoroughgoing Tory and a strong party man; yet he has scarcely overcoloured the actual facts. Tittlebat Titmouse was a typical candidate of a kind. With neither manners, education, nor brains, he had nothing to recommend him but his position as a great landowner with commanding influence. As for Yatton, it was one of those boroughs betwixt and between the big and the very little, where there was just enough of local independence to make a contest tolerably hopeful under favourable conditions. There is Mr Crafty, the famous electoral agent, sent down to act for Mr Delamere, with instructions to do all that is possible, keeping within the spirit of the law. Naturally, the disgusted agent, who is limited to legitimate outlay, asks himself why Mr Delamere engaged his services at all. Nevertheless, he sets himself to earn his pay and save his credit by playing a game of brag and simulated bribery, with neither trumps nor money in his hand. Had he had *carte blanche* given him, he could have bought the electors "like a flock of sheep," and bought them without reasonable probability of detection. As it is, there is nothing for it but manœuvring; and he manœuvres with such Machiavellian astuteness that the Quaint Club, which holds the electoral balance, is kept in suspense till the last moment.

Crafty only loses their collective support by a counter-trick of his dangerous antagonist. Then we have Judas M'Doem, who sells his friends, with the evidence that should assure the success of a petition. We have one friend of Mr Titmouse indiscreetly paying £5 for a phenomenal cat warranted to wink simultaneously with both eyes; while Mr Bloodsuck, the lawyer, gives a generous *douceur* to stop some boys who were in the habit of "taking sights" at him with their fingers at their noses. Next, in the way of coercion, we see Gammon at the polling-booth, grave and stern, noting down the names of the melancholy Yatton tenantry who had dared to stick to their principles and vote for Delamere; and tendering, by way of malicious insult, the bribery oath to the venerable vicar. The ballot may be a bad measure or a good one, but assuredly it relieved dependants from grave disabilities, and saved the farmer from the searching test which made eviction the penalty of indulging in a conscience. As for the Lansmere election in 'My Novel,' admirably described as it is in all its details, it rather illustrates electoral proceedings in their more ideal aspects. Personal influences are predominant as ever, but on the whole it is a fair and open fight between Dick Avenel's interest in the rising town and the Lansmere influence in the town and the

county. While in Lansmere, still half aristocratic though partially democratised, we have the lingering traces of the former state of things, since Audley Egerton, having lost credit with his great commercial constituency, comes to Lansmere as the nominee of his friend Lord L'Estrange. Dickens's elections in 'Pickwick' and 'Our Mutual Friend' are purely humorous, or rather bits of amusing buffoonery. Mr Slumkey, at Eatanswill, kissing armfuls of newly washed babies, is much on a par with Messrs Boots and Brewer hurrying about West London in hansom cabs to bring in Veneering for his purchase of Pocket-breeches. But Thackeray, with his realistic observation of men and manners, has singularly graphic touches in the election scenes at Ringwood and Newcome. What can be more clever than the gallant old Tom Newcome, aristocrat and strict disciplinarian to the backbone, making promises he could not possibly keep, and enunciating all manner of socialistic and subversive opinions, which would have shocked his convictions had he ever considered them? "The black man," in the 'Adventures of Philip,' in power of oratory and brain is the counterpart of Mr Tittlebat Titmouse; and the fighting costermonger parading his effigy as "a man and a brother" is a gem of personal election humour. But all that fun,

frolic, fighting, and stealthy financing will soon be but the melancholy memories of a half-forgotten past. Now the excitement is decentralised, as polling-places have been multiplied; if drouthy souls get dry over discussions, they must quench their thirst at their own expense; the bars and tap-rooms are dull and deserted; the industrious unemployed seek occupation in vain; the very candidates must practise temperance in the hotels that are their headquarters, and look very carefully to the totals of their liquor bills; even their lawyers can only charge extraordinary trouble at ordinary rates, in the certainty that the accounts will be jealously scrutinised; while the nomination is by passionless signing of papers, and the "declaration," which was formerly so dramatic, is foredoomed to be dull as ditch-water. Sad indeed, from the romantic point of view, are the changes from the times when hostile voters were ravished from their families and sent on cruises to sea; when the inn-cellars became places of temporary sequestration for the intoxicated; when linchpins were tampered with and coaches upset to contract; and when the maimed and wounded, after an agitating poll, filled the beds in the local hospitals and infirmaries.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LOADSTONE OF LONDON.

FIRST among the marvels of civilisation in the nineteenth century is the metropolis of the British Empire. No other city can rival or even approach it in wealth, size, and population. Had Victor Hugo been born a Briton, we should have had eloquent and endless rhapsodies on the subject. We can conceive how the Titanic poet might have revelled in the startling contrasts that would have inspired his impassioned imagination. Colossal riches and extreme poverty; rank and intellectual eminence standing out from the depths of social degradation and criminal depravity; philanthropists and political economists vainly endeavouring to grapple with the apparently insoluble social problems which are being gravely aggravated from year to year. From the more practical points of view he would have taken a patriot's pride in the square leagues upon leagues of bricks and mortar, throbbing with the incessant pulsations of their millions

of anxious hearts. The ideal Paris of Hugo may be the Light of the world of thought, but the London of reality is the grand incarnation of all that is most indefatigable in progress and enterprise, as of all that is painfully prosaic in the sadder aspects of humanity. Overgrown London resembles nothing so much as the Loadstone Mountain in the oriental tale. For successive generations, but more especially in the last half-century, it has been exercising an ever-increasing power of attraction on the entire population of the islands. It need hardly be said that the construction of the railways gave the centripetal movement an immense impulse ; nor that, consequently, the natural and inevitable results have been largely to modify the national character. Cobbett, with his fixed opinions and in his forcible language, was never weary of denouncing "the Wen." Well, the wen has been growing ever since, and is likely to grow, for good and for evil, at a rate of development which the dogged old Radical could never have foreseen. In 1836 the population was something like one million nine hundred thousand ; in 1887, so far as any exact census can now be taken, it must exceed four millions. As for the expansion of acreage, it is impossible to estimate it, and for sufficient reasons. No man can say where London begins or where it ends. Cities spring up

without the City, as in the case of West Ham, which has been spreading with the force of a fungus-growth among the sugar-bakeries in the Essex marshes. Sudden growths of the kind are as much a matter of course as the accidental annexation of a kingdom like Burmah, or the casual appropriation of some unsurveyed territory in South Africa. We cannot define how London has been extending, but at least we may recall some facts by way of illustration. When Cobbett started on one of his rides through Surrey and Hants, he comments on the spade-husbandry of the market-gardens, in what is now fashionable South Kensington, and talks of the rural solitudes of St George's Fields, which are covered at present with squares and terraces. At that time you could look out from Bloomsbury to Islington, over an open expanse of hay-fields and meadow-land. We were admiring a venerable print the other day, which gives the prospect from Queen Square and Guildford Street quite a sylvan character. It was somewhat subsequently, as we believe, that the last snipe was shot in Belgravia. So lately as 1847 Mr Edward Jesse brought out his 'Favourite Haunts and Rural Studies,' which, by the way, is a very delightful book. He speaks of Norwood and Penge as we might write of Dartmoor or the New Forest nowadays, with the

shady solitudes and the leafy lanes, and the sheltered nooks of furzy common where tribes of the gipsies were wont to bivouac. This suggests another reason for the impossibility of gauging the actual expansion of the metropolis; for Norwood, though it may have a nominal identity of its own, is London to all intents and purposes. So is Croydon; so are Blackheath and Woolwich; so, indeed, as many people might aver, are Hastings, Eastbourne, and Brighton. Suburban railways have taken the place of suburban omnibuses. There may still be gaps of intervening space where the rooks are cawing in the elms within the great walled solitudes of some venerable manor-house; where quaint homesteads have passed into the hands of suburban farmers, paying fancy rents in consideration of the cheapness of town manures and of the profitable proximity to the London markets. But these open spaces are being swiftly swallowed up by the inexorable advance of the speculative builder. Water companies are laying down their mains; gas companies reach out their arms to each other and establish connections; long lines of slight cottages and semi-detached villas are run up; police-patrolled and illuminated "roads" stretch away into the country; so one locality is insensibly merged in another, to be enrolled in the next edition of the Metropolitan Directory.

When we go back to what is more actually London, we are bewildered by the changes brought about in the lifetime of the present generation. Take the centre of the City, where the bustle of business is surging about the pavements and crossings between the Bank, the Mansion House, and the Exchange. Demolition and reconstruction have been proceeding apace. Advantageous sites have been sold or leased, at prices that would have sounded fabulous to our grandfathers. Imposing blocks of buildings are soaring towards the skies containing labyrinths of dimly lighted chambers. At the angle of each leading street stands the banking establishment or insurance office, with its magnificent plate-glass windows staring out of the sumptuous façade. It is clear that the slow old principles are exploded which associated modesty of externals with solidity of credit, and never dreamed of advertising cash reserves by the ostentation of lavish expenditure. The City is more crowded than ever at high noon; but now it is left of a night by the money-making citizens to the caretakers, the burglars, and the constables. I believe that occasionally a junior partner may occupy apartments, in virtue of a respectable tradition, above his banking premises in Lombard Street; but no self-respecting tradesman ever thinks of housing his family over the shop-

front in Cornhill or Cheapside. He has settled in the suburbs with wife and children. The very India House in Leadenhall Street is become a memory of the past, since the affairs of the conquering Company of Merchants were liquidated in favour of the Crown. The City is more bustling than ever through the day, and the commercial men who chiefly contribute to the income-tax are far more cosmopolitan than formerly. There is a Babel of tongues in a blending of nationalities. The Jews are with us still, as they have always been, and London has reason to be grateful to them. But the speculative Greeks and the pushing and frugal Germans have been coming to the front, and we may read the outlandish names of foreign firms everywhere on the door-plates and window-panes. Home-born merchants will grumble at the growing competition, but the community may congratulate itself on knitting up commercial connections with all the mercantile races of the world; for while these strangers are getting fortunes or competences for themselves, they largely contribute to the national prosperity. And while talking of commerce, we may throw a glance down the river, although we must not linger there in the meantime. The Pool is more crowded than ever with shipping, although sails for the most part have given place to steam.

Yet the river is but the water-way to the enormous docks, excavated on either bank from the Tower down to Tilbury, with their piles of bonded warehouses, into which goods are being perpetually discharged from hundreds of capacious holds. For, notwithstanding the progress of such ports as Liverpool or Cardiff, the Loadstone of London has still been attracting traffic, as latterly the great lines to the East and South Africa have been transferring their headquarters from the Solent to the Thames. A Greenwich dinner in the season is as pleasant a way as any of getting a picturesque although a superficial idea of the traffic and trade of amphibious London. At high tide a perpetual panorama of shipping is passing before your eyes, till it becomes a mystery how, in even tolerably bright weather, the pilots contrive to steer clear of collisions, as the monster craft swing slowly to the wheel. As for our infamous fogs, the voyage to Greenwich by sixpenny boat goes a long way to explain them. The funnels of the steamers are belching black smoke; while dense clouds from the factory chimneys on either shore remind us that Eastern London is a great manufacturing city. The sea mists floating up-stream combine with the drifting smoke-wreaths; nor is the atmosphere likely to be lightened to the west, where a million or more of fires are blazing away merrily.

In East London, beyond a radius of half a mile or less from the Bank, the progress of the half-century has been severely practical. The minds of men have been set upon money-getting, and everything has been made subservient to the worship of Mammon. Walking westwards from St Paul's, we may admire the efforts of private capitalists and the labours of the Board of Works. Already, with its broad effects, blurred as they are by hideous railway-bridges, the Thames Embankment is one of the noblest promenades of Europe, although it will be finer still and infinitely more attractive should it ever be overshadowed by the foliage of its trees. It needs an effort of memory to take us back to the time when David Copperfield might have looked out from his motherly landlady's windows on the slopes of odoriferous slime at low tide, where the mud-larks were disporting themselves among the refuse of the river. We might as well evolve the pictures from 'The Fortunes of Nigel' of "the ancient sanctuary of Whitefriars," beneath the elevated gardens of the Temple, and "generally involved in damps and fogs." Now the grim old Temple has been in great measure rebuilt, and its chambers have been rented at rates that are almost exorbitant. The gardens have been beautified and brightened with lawn-tennis courts and brilliant winter-blooms of chrysan-

themums since Ruth Pinch met John Westlock by the murmuring fountain. And so we saunter past other gardens always open to the public, till, turning the corner of Northumberland Avenue, we are in the bustle of the modern clubs and hotels. They are the visible signs of the irresistible suction that fashionable London has been exercising on provincial society. When George Osborne ran up from country quarters to town, with his pocket-book stuffed with his father's bank-notes, he was content to put up at the "Old Slaughters'," in St Martin's Lane. We can remember, about a quarter of a century ago, when Covent Garden, with its "piazzas," was the general resort of bachelor visitors. There were costly "family hotels" in some of the fashionably old-fashioned Western squares; there were the "Clarendon" and Mivart's for the reception of illustrious foreigners; but otherwise the houses of reception were less hotels than hostelries. Morley's, in Trafalgar Square, must have had almost a monopoly of the best middle-class patronage. The beginning of the marvelous transformation we have seen was in the building of the Great Western Hotel at Paddington. From the first, it filled to its uppermost storeys, and paid eminently satisfactory dividends. Now there are vast caravanserais at each of the great railway stations except Water-

loo. Depending for the most part on birds of passage, they have set an example which has been generally followed. All this building and beautifying have proved indirectly profitable to many who never dream of their direct concern in it; and London, transformed to brick and stucco, if not to marble, threatens to eclipse the Paris of the Republic. In fact, æsthetically the fault of overgrown London is the lack of centralisation in its effects. Structures of sumptuous grandeur or high antiquarian interest are hopelessly scattered, from the old Elizabethan houses in busy Holborn to the domestic palaces adorning Kensington or Mayfair.

CHAPTER V.

LONDON AND THE COUNTIES.

THE magnetic attractions of London have been revolutionising English society all through the Victorian reign. Necessarily that has been partly for good and partly for evil; but it is certain that the effects have been felt in the remotest districts of the islands. The provincial towns have been changing their character; they have been left more to the leading of the wealthy middle classes who are bound down to residence by professional or industrial occupations. Look at the capitals of Scotland and Ireland. It is true that even sixty years ago, in his life of Scott, Lockhart tells us that the nobility had deserted Edinburgh. There were only two or three peers, and those among the poorest, who still spent the winters in their ancestral mansions. Or, as Sydney Smith put it, the Scotch pack had been shuffled, and all the court-cards had slipped out. Yet even then Edinburgh was

the regular resort of the country gentlemen with long pedigrees and respectable rent-rolls who represented the lesser barons of an earlier age. Doubtless the tone of society was still strongly tinged by the legal element; and Lockhart remarks that after-dinner conversation was spoiled by those logical and philosophical *tours de force* in which Johnson delighted. But the reason was very obvious. In Scotland, which had borrowed many of the customs of France, there had always been a distinguished *noblesse* of the robe. Scott, in the prelude to his 'Chronicles of the Canongate,' explains why in nineteen cases out of twenty every Scotchman of good fortune and family was bred to the Bar. If he were a cadet of ability, with small means and expectations, the way was smoothed for him by his birth and connections to the most lucrative legal appointments; while his elder brother was sent to attend the law lectures, with the idea of saving his money by superintending the management of his estates. The noblemen might have their residence in London—adventurers of exceptional talent and audacity might seek their fortunes in the south—youths with friends in the Court of Directors were already crowding into the Indian services; but Edinburgh was still the rallying centre for Scotchmen of blood and breeding. There was a sufficiency of money

in circulation; hospitality was freely practised, and the Bordeaux, for which Leith has always been famous, circulated swiftly after dinner. The dancing assemblies were as fashionable and as exclusive in their way as the more aristocratic gatherings at Almack's; and Scottish matrons with marriageable daughters found any number of eligible *partis* in those happy northern hunting-grounds. In short, for well-born natives with tolerably well-filled purses Edinburgh was an extremely agreeable place, and they had little inducement to go further, where they were pretty certain to fare worse. The laird, who was a big man among his own belongings, would have been lost in London, even as London was then. As for the Dublin of 1836, it was gayer and far more rollicking than the Maiden city. A Scotchman may lose his head in a reel or a strathspey, or he may become affectionately expansive at the close of a convivial evening, when singing "Auld Lang Syne" towards the small hours; but, as a rule, he is cautious and self-contained—and, even in his maddest dissipation, he considers the main chance. As for the Irishman of fifty years ago, he held with heart and soul to the Sybarite's maxim of *carpe diem*, and took slight thought for the morrow. He spent his money like a man, however he came by it; and if he were hopelessly over head and ears in debt,

he only strained his credit the more recklessly. Whether it were on account of St George's Channel, or the inveterate brogue, or the reflected splendour of a Lord Lieutenant's Court, Irishmen of all ranks were more home-keeping than Scotchmen. Dublin was still the place of residence of many of the Irish nobility, and the Club in Kildare Street was a local "White's," though there has never been much to look out upon in the dull thoroughfare below the windows. The balances had never been struck which threw so much rack-rented land into the Encumbered Estates Court. The middlemen and squireens and shoneens were still to the fore, relieving the landlords of much money and responsibility. The many-storeyed mansions in Stephen's Green and Merrion Square, occupied by the landed gentry and lawyers in large practice, were the scenes of exuberant and reckless festivity. Those were the days when Lever's dashing heroes—captains in crack cavalry corps, or lady-killing aides-de-camp to his Excellency—found Dublin an earthly paradise, though they might sneer at its provincial manners. What with the routs and the dances—with the reviews in the Phoenix, where the fashionables paraded in carriages and cars—with picnics at Dunleary and race-meetings at the Curragh,—the ball was kept continually rolling. Now Dublin seems a silent city of the

dead, save among the pawn-shops and public-houses in the crowded back slums; the rents in once favourite quarters have been falling with the rents of the farms; a well-appointed equipage in the streets is a phenomenon; and even the pick of the blood-horses in which the gilded and stable-minded youth used to delight are bought and exported by English dealers.

The irresistible attraction of London has been exercising an extraordinary influence on the country parishes and the petty towns. Formerly the country gentleman stayed at home, contenting himself with the society of his neighbours and dependants. It was a tedious and expensive journey to the metropolis, and unless he were member for the shire or sat for a borough, he knew next to nobody when he got there. It was impossible to carry the ladies of his family by coach; and posting, with the hotel expenses, cost, as the case might be, from £50 to £150. Even when the steamers with their cheap fares were introduced, the sorrows of the rough coasting-voyage were a serious objection. Consequently his interests and pleasures continued to be concentrated in his own locality, as those of his father had been before. He shot or hunted and coursed; he filled his house with his county neighbours, who entertained him in their turn. It was an excitement to drive into the

nearest town of a market-day, to gossip with the tradesmen who had always supplied his family, to drop in at the "Red Lion" or the "King's Arms," and to condescend to lunch at the farmers' ordinary, where they discussed the prices of cattle and stock. As they were all agriculturists, getting their living from the land, the universal talk was of crops and bullocks. Foreign politics scarcely affected them, except in so far as a war raised the taxes with the prices of their produce. Nor did they concern themselves much with domestic questions beyond the rating and the road bills, unless deeply rooted prejudices were brought into play, as when it was a question of perpetuating Catholic disabilities. The belated newspapers, that were dear and scarce, were passed on from hand to hand; but the columns of "domestics" in their own local journal were all the county gentlemen really cared for. And if they took so little interest in public affairs, it may be conceived that literature had few charms for them. Scott remarked about 1825, looking down on the many comfortable mansions which had been rising in the romantic valley of the Tweed, that he did not believe one of those well-to-do gentlemen spent so much as ten pounds per annum upon books, although they never grudged money for their claret. Yet these were men who loved and appreciated the great Magi-

cian, and who had been living in the charmed circle of his conversation and cultivated tastes. But that hereditary Philistinism, if the phrase is not too harsh, had its social advantages and its kindly side. Despite the associations and reminiscences of a generally neglected classical education, the English squire and the Scotch laird were on something of a level with the farmer, and even with the peasant. The rich, being in constant and familiar relations with the poor, could sympathise with their feelings and understand their needs. If the rich did not more fully realise their responsibilities than the generation that has succeeded them, more of the instinctive impulses of friendship entered into their intercourse with their dependants. The force of local opinion was felt, and harsh landlords were the exception. Moreover, whether he were good or bad, extravagant or parsimonious, the landlord spent and saved in his county. What he bestowed in charity was given in his parish or to local institutions; what he spent in pleasure was spent in the provincial towns. The races and the assizes, a cattle-show or a concert, were events that were looked forward to and welcomed in his household. Rooms had been engaged in the county hotel long before, and the services of the borough milliners came into requisition. London exquisites might smile superciliously at the man-

ners at these meetings, and ridicule the talk as they sneered at the costumes. But the unsophisticated company thoroughly enjoyed itself; and when the gentlefolks drove home with lightened purses, they had left goodwill and gratitude behind.

Now London has been exercising its fascinations on the landed gentry from boyhood upwards. The baby in the cradle is entered for a fashionable public school, to be sent up in due time to one of the universities. He forms in his college those youthful friendships that hold fast, and the affections of nine-tenths of his companions are fixed in London. The less affluent he is, and more especially if his connections be in no way distinguished, the more likely he is to give himself over to the social aspirations which can only be gratified in London. It is in London that he must seek the entry to the best society; and if he is to hold his own with the "bigger wigs" of his neighbourhood, he must meet them in good London drawing-rooms during the season. Or if the ambitious youth be anything beyond a mere trifler, he will feel the magnetic influence of London all the more. Johnson declared long ago, although in other words, that it was the only place worth living in. Whether you turn towards politics, or have a taste for letters or the arts, you meet at every corner, if you are fairly launched, celebrities in

their several lines, or the politicians who are contributing towards making history. Even if you do not enjoy the privilege of intimacy with Cabinet Ministers and statesmen, you at least hear the flying rumours which have the charm of apparent credibility; and you may listen in the smoking-rooms of political clubs to the oracular utterances of the Tapers and the Tadpoles. A political crisis brings excitement that can never be forgotten, when the country in convulsions is on the brink of a catastrophe, and patriots and pessimists are despairing of its safety. Or you are excited more mildly by suggestive whispers and shrewd speculations over the authorship of some remarkable work; or you assist at the first representation of the play for which the critics are predicting an unparalleled run; or you go the round of the famous studios on the eve of the opening of the Academy, under the guidance of a "candid friend" of the great masters. Nay, even in the world of the sports, strange as it would once have seemed, London has become the natural headquarters. Of course the racing man finds the capital a convenient starting-point for Doncaster or Chester, Stockbridge or Goodwood; while, spider-like, the bookmaker may sit spinning his webs for the unwary in the centre of a complicated telegraph system. The hunting

man may easily send on horses by train to any one of a dozen different packs; and if he has his stables at Melton or elsewhere in the shires, it is in London he naturally seeks refuge when forced to strike work through the frosts. For the crack shot with many friends who loves the battue, London is the only place to pick up invitations or to be picked up personally at the eleventh hour when some other gun has given in. Lord's and the Oval are the favourite resorts of the critical connoisseur in cricket; while amateurs of the pigeon-trap, the oar, and the racket have equally exceptional opportunities of gratifying their respective passions. It is clear enough that indulgences of the kind must demoralise men—and women likewise—for the comparative insipidity and monotony of existence elsewhere. To quote our old friend Dr Johnson again, "The man who is tired of London must be tired of life." The craving for fierce excitements at first hand necessarily grows with its gratification; and although excess must often breed satiety, the intelligent man who has become *blasé* in London knows well that he will fare far worse elsewhere, and sadly resigns himself to his fate. If he has drained the Circean cup to the dregs, he can only lament that it has palsied his appetite for pleasures without steeping his senses in oblivion.

CHAPTER VI.

SOCIETY AND THE CLUBS.

PERHAPS we may best estimate the changes in London society by contrasting the present with the past, in the light of the Memoirs and Correspondence with which we have lately been gratified. The Greville journals, the Croker correspondence and diaries, and the more desultory letters of Mr Hayward, are so many revelations as to events and incidents of the greatest interest which had hitherto been more or less mysterious. The writers had been behind the scenes when the public and the press were groping in the dark. There were close corporations in party politics as in the boroughs, and very close corporations these were. Party strategy was either dictated by autocrats, succeeding each other by something like hereditary right, or it was discussed and decided in a council of two or three. Under a system of government by "Venetian oligarchies," reticence

was the first obligation of a rising politician. A flattering confidence bound him over to secrecy. He had a profound respect for the dispensers of patronage, and a serene contempt for the public and the troublesome constituents whom nevertheless he was bound to consider. Men like Croker, Greville, and Hayward occupied exceptional positions as the official or officious advisers of leading statesmen. Croker, in virtue of his hard common-sense and talents for business, was perpetually consulted by the Duke of Wellington and Peel, till Peel threw over the country party and renounced the principles which had been advocated in the 'Quarterly.' Greville, by his connections, his social qualities, and his position as Clerk of the Council—*grincheur* as he might be—became the familiar friend of the leading Liberals; while Hayward, with his independent self-assertion, must frequently have imposed his ideas on both home and foreign statesmen who were unquestionably his intellectual superiors. The diaries and correspondence of those social politicians are as much things of the past as the letters of a Mme. de Sévigné or a Horace Walpole. There is no place nowadays for their private news-sheets, since now there can be no monopoly of such private and miscellaneous information. There may still be Cabinet secrets; but they can be

only kept for a time. The innermost "rings" of political circles have been shattered, and society is continually becoming more and more popularised. Cabinets must be put together on the principle of including the most capable and self-asserting representatives of the powerful middle-class interests; and although the aristocratic element is still in the ascendant, yet aspiring politicians of every party are bound to fall back on the backing of the people. The future is with the masses, and may very possibly be with the mob.

Even after the passing of the Reform Bill, the House of Commons was one of the most comfortable and steady-going of gentlemanlike clubs. There were sensational divisions from time to time, when Whips were cracking all over the country, and dying men were wheeled into the lobby, between their doctors and their valets. Now and again a great party was startled out of its propriety, as on Peel's change of front on the burning question of the Corn-laws. But, as a rule, the border-lines of party were still sharply defined, and any eccentricities of conduct among the rank and file inevitably inferred political ostracism, unless justified by more than ordinary ability. The Humes, the Roebucks, the Chisholm Ansteys, and the Bernal Osbornes were privileged personages and toler-

ated exceptions who merely proved the rigidity of the rule. Now members with original ideas or mounted on particular hobbies have been hustling each other in the House. They have often been returned as "coming men"; they have written sensational articles in the Reviews, or have made telling speeches from provincial platforms, and they stand pledged to justify the promises of their antecedents. Place is the proof of political success, and place they must seek to attain upon any terms, were it only to satisfy their constituents. Failing place, they strive for publicity. Although when they do succeed in catching the Speaker's eye they may be coughed down, they are still fluent as ever at local gatherings; and as they have words, if not ideas, in abundance, they may be oracles in their own sets in London or their boroughs.

Talking of the men who might shine in vestries or on school boards, and who often cut a too conspicuous figure at quarter sessions, naturally takes us with them into the clubs which have done so much to diffuse, and at the same time to centralise, the interest in politics. When Thackeray wrote the 'Snob Papers,' and long afterwards, the clubs of Western London might almost have been counted on the fingers. At all events, it was easy to classify them. There were the fashionable clubs, where the balloting was

severely exclusive. There were the Service Clubs, the East Indian Clubs, the two University Clubs, with the Athenæum and the Travelers' ranking by themselves. There was Arthur's for the country gentlemen. There were two or three hospitable establishments, like the Union and the Wyndham, offering membership on non-political grounds; and finally, there were the three or four great political clubs. Many men who were sufficiently eligible necessarily found themselves left out in the cold, and never dreamed even of being entered on the candidates' books. When Arthur Pendennis, thanks to his uncle, was elected a member of the Polyanthus, George Warrington, the son of an ancient family and a first-class man at Oxbridge, was content to take his chop and tobacco in the taverns in the purlieus of Fleet Street. That was the lot of many gentlemen of fair family who came to London in search of fortune, and of almost all visitors from the country whether bent upon business or pleasure. On these flying trips our worthy country cousins were as much isolated in the swarms of their fellows as the adventurous explorer in Central Africa, paying his way among peoples of strange speech with coloured beads and cotton stuffs. They found a stuffy bedroom in St James's, or billeted themselves in a back chamber of some hotel in Covent

Garden. They got a substantial English dinner at Simpson's in the Strand, or at "The Wellington," which prospered greatly for a time in the gilded gambling saloons of Crockford's. After the solitary dinner they killed the evening as they could—at the play, at Cremorne, or in Thackeray's "Cave of Harmony," according to their several tastes and inclinations. A very few days of that mild dissipation naturally bored them to death, and they went home sadder than they came up, although certainly no wiser. Now all that has been changed. The Scotch laird, the Lancashire manufacturer, and even the mayor of Little Peddlington, are members of a magnificent Constitutional or Liberal Club. They may not actually hobnob with Premiers or Foreign Secretaries; they may not hear Mr Gladstone discussing Home Rule or the Greek drama in the smoking-room towards midnight, as they were led to expect by the seductive circulars. But they not only revel in luxury in palatial halls, and may try their digestions with indifferent French entries, but they have the undoubted privilege of mixing in intelligent and Christian company. As their faces and figures become more or less familiar, they may make acquaintanceships in the morning-room or smoking-room, and thenceforth, having a home and interests in London, they must live in the magnetic influ-

ence of the metropolis. The characteristic feature of the more new-fangled of the minor clubs is that they bring together many sorts and conditions of men. As they are generally started on speculation, their committees are free from fastidiousness; and members are tempted to enrol themselves by the temporary suspension of entry-money. The consequence is that the conditions of membership are a creditable character and a decent coat. The *nouveau riche* meets the briefless barrister; the author in embryo, who once would have dined in Grub Street with Duke Humphrey, has now his joint and his "table" in Piccadilly or Pall Mall; and assuredly society has gained by the increasing facilities of club membership. The self-made man of money and the brilliant Bohemian must conform to the common standard of respectability. The one is being educated in spite of himself, if he have any capacity for education, and the other is spared the temptations which used often to bring genius to grief. Time and even money may be wasted at the clubs, but the general tone of their manners is unimpeachable; and, on the whole, their influences have been all for good. No lively young law student need be driven to choose now between a lonely evening in his dreary chambers and the spirits and tobacco of the tavern. The lawyer in busy

practice is no longer condemned to seek solitary relaxation over his bottles of port. Man meets man; mind clashes with mind; and sparks of brilliant intelligence are set flying, as from the sharp contact of flint striking upon steel. No doubt there is dulness enough in the clubs, with the infinite trivialities of unmeaning chatter; while perverse spirits, bent on going to the mischief, will be held back by no conceivable restraints. But the clubs keep many a man from harm, and should be more favourably regarded by the ladies than they are; at least they cultivate the hypocrisies of superficial self-respect, and they warm up the interest in public affairs which goes far towards making a man a useful citizen.

Moreover, that life of the clubs has been reacting on London dinner-tables. The bores satirised by Thackeray are still unhappily with us; but we are glad to think that the breed becomes rarer, and we have some faint hopes that it may ultimately be exterminated. Club smoking-rooms are conversational, sullen, or meditative; they cultivate sententious intercourse by ejaculation, and discourage wearisome twaddle. The man must be clad in something thicker than hippopotamus-hide who can stand on the rug like Jawkins and silence all other voices. There are natures which are compara-

tively insensible to snubbing; but each club member, as a rule, is brought to his bearings. These unwritten laws of social equality have been stretched even further at fashionable or intellectual dinner-tables. Crisp talk is everything, and every man with anything in him hopes to be heard in his turn. Coleridge's interminable disquisitions, with all the fire of their philosophical eloquence, would never be tolerated; and we suspect that even Macaulay would have been scratched from the dinner-lists of many of his admirers unless his brilliant flashes of silence had become more frequent. We wish to be entertained or excited; we do not care to listen to lectures or to rhapsodies over the wine and the walnuts; so that the shortest anecdotes are only accepted with approval if they bring their own apologies as felicitous illustrations, and tedious stories or reminiscences are absolutely tabooed. Sydney Smith, with his ever ready repartee, might still be a welcome guest; but the running fire of jests, puns, and personal allusions with which Theodore Hook kept the table in a roar is gone as entirely out of date as the after-dinner toasts of our grandfathers. Even the refined Lord Eskdale or the witty Mr Pinto would have to be on their guard and take care that they did not become too vivacious. Indeed, the most brilliant and intellectual diners-

out of the day are bound over to reserve from personal motives. Either they are in Parliament, when they keep their best things for their speeches; or they have taken honours in the literary world, and sell thoughts and fancies to the periodicals.

CHAPTER VII.

ROADS AND RAILS.

LOOKING back to the travelling of fifty years ago as compared with the present, it is the tortoise to the hare in point of pace. Yet little more than fifty years ago, and before the rails were laid down from Liverpool to Manchester, our grandfathers would have said that the travelling was perfection. They had some reason to boast; for, so far as our internal communications were concerned, the progress in the previous generation had been marvellous. Even now it is pleasant, if rather sad, to read "Nimrod's" famous 'Quarterly' article on the Road, although at that time the changes of the future were already dimly perceptible through the smoke-clouds from the furnaces of the new-fangled engines. The progress had been marvellous, for that intelligent Scotchman, Mr Macadam, had been hard at work upon the highways. He found them laid down pretty much on the principles

accepted in England since the days of the Druids. The shortest cut was the first consideration ; hills were scaled by the most uncompromising gradients, while the valleys, which were followed religiously, were so many Sloughs of Despond in the wet season. The heavy coach or the lumbering stage-waggon took its time, with a tremendous expenditure of horse-flesh and whip-cord. Smollett and Fielding describe the leisurely travelling of the days when road companions found time to make ample acquaintance. Even when Vittoria was fought and Waterloo was won, the coachman never hurried his passengers. As "Nimrod" says, he had a calf to consign to the country butcher, or a parcel to deliver to the borough attorney ; and when his commissions were discharged, he was always willing to wait if the gentlemen who had been dining at the inn were disposed for another bottle of port. Mr Macadam very summarily altered all that, anticipating the celerity and punctuality of steam. New roads were engineered, levelled, and drained ; rapid and regular delivery began to pay the enterprising capitalists who horsed the swift coaches. Chaplin had 1300 horses in his stables ; Horne, who subsequently went into partnership with him, came second with no fewer than 700. The coach-builders had succeeded in combining speed with solidity ; the luggage was stowed

away in capacious boots or in the "slides" beneath the body of the vehicle. There was no chance now of linch-pins snapping of a sudden, for the linch-pins were superseded by the patent box-axles. And all these elaborate precautions were indispensable to reduce the inevitable risks to a minimum. The old gentleman supposed by "Nimrod" to have awakened from a Rip-Van-Winkle-like slumber had good reason for his grave apprehensions. The coaches galloping against each other were running perpetual races with time, and when unpunctuality was punished with heavy penalties and loss of credit, each minute was precious. We are startled nowadays from time to time by some sensational railway accident, yet nobody, as a rule, ever dreams of danger. But in the "Comets" or the "Highflyers" at any moment the perils of the transit might be brought unpleasantly home to one. The half-thoroughbred horses cost on an average only about twenty-five pounds; any untractable rogue was consigned to the coaching stables, and the queerest teams were consequently hitched together. They were tamed on each successive day by a spell of severe work; but they fed freely at rack and manger, and were kept in tip-top condition. They were steadied by the drag on steep descents, to be cheated out of half the opposite hill; they swung round the

angles of awkward bridges at a hand-gallop ; and they were “sprung” over each level stretch of ground, where there was “nothing bigger than a nutmeg” in the way of a pebble. Through rain and storm, through darkness and sleet, much depended on the chapter of accidents, and more on the skill and coolness of the whip. The driver must have a head as well as hands ; for it was barely possible that something about the harness might snap, or that he might come into collision with an unexpected obstacle. The steadier wheelers were supposed to act as *mécaniques* on the skittish leaders ; but occasionally he had to give even the wheelers their heads, to lift the four into a gallop, and to trust in Providence. And when a coach did come to grief, the consequences were generally tragic. It was not every driver who could arrange an upset as cleverly as Mr Weller, senior, when he was paid to spill his load of electors. The wheel caught on the kerbstone of a sharp street turn or at the corner of a bridge ; the outsiders were sent flying through the shop-windows or into the bubbling water, when, to say nothing of the deaths, there were such disagreeable casualties as fractured limbs and shattered ribs or collar-bones. Yet there was a certain excitement, which was not unwelcome to the adventurous, in that ever-present sense of possible peril. As a rule, the

change of horses was effected with the swift dexterity of a theatrical transformation-scene; a minute was the time ordinarily allowed, though the change was occasionally carried through in fifty seconds. But not unfrequently there would be "contrairy devils" who would decline to start under any persuasion. I am old enough to remember a changing-place on one of the northern roads, where, by some strange fatality of coincidences, there were always backers or bolters. An uglier starting-point it would be hard to conceive. It was in the narrow High Street of a populous borough, and the coach-road turned sharply to the right fifty yards from the door of the "Salutation." There the horse that was harnessed as the near-wheeler, where he could be most easily kept in hand, would begin by rearing bolt-upright on his blemished hind-legs, and possibly, after being flogged and soothed by turns, would end by sullenly throwing himself down. He was persuaded to rise by straw being burned about him, and then he was accommodated with an old collar or two to dance upon. When finally he did deem it advisable to make a start, his three companions had been fretted into madness. Then each trembling traveller drew his breath and held on, while the team tore round the dangerous corner.

So much by way of recollection of some of the

risks of the road ; as for the discomforts, they are easily imaginable. The cramped confinement inside was as nothing, it is true, to that of the intolerable Continental diligences, which would roll leisurely through eighty or ninety hours on end, from Paris to Milan or from Vienna to Warsaw. Still it was bad enough in all conscience, though you might confidently count the shorter hours of your wretchedness. Speculating on the chances of the wet and the cold in winter, the weary traveller might resign himself to book for the inside, with companions who were pretty sure to be ill-mated or irascible. All men were not so fortunate as the Antiquary when he met Lovel in the Hawes Fly for the Queensferry. More probably there would be the asthmatic gentleman with the cough, who objected to the windows being lowered in any circumstances ; the old lady with the big basket and the endless small packages ; or the fruitful mother of a boisterous brood, with the child on her knees, whose squalls made sleep impossible. You were buried above the ankles in musty straw, and the coach-pockets were padded out with bottles and packets of provisions. Even as I write, fond memory forcibly recalls the mingled odours of spirits, sandwiches, and stable litter. Or if you manfully decided to face rough weather from the roof, you probably had cause

to repent it before you descended. When possible, one used to pay extra for the box-seat, and perhaps it was worth the money, irrespective of the improving conversation of the coachman. But, in spite of the leather-covered box-rug he shared with you *en bon camarade*, it was bitter work of a blustering January night. Ulsters had not been invented, the futile umbrella was still in ordinary use on the coach-roof; and the many-caped box-coat, which was fashionable London wear, was a monopoly of the Corinthian Toms and the luxurious. The rain beat down your neck; the sleet was driven in at every button-hole; your overcoat was speedily saturated; you lost all sense of feeling in your feet and hands; and, nevertheless, in the depth of despondent misery, you would yield to the treacherous seduction of sleep. We can well recall one winter morning, when many times we owed our life to the coachman, who repeatedly jerked his rein-elbow into our ribs, as we were on the point of toppling off, to be crushed under the hind-wheel. Short of such a tragic fate beneath the wheels of the Mail or the "Defiance," there were other hazards to be faced in a snow-storm. For the coach that contracted to carry the mail-bags would persevere till the difficulties became absolutely insuperable; and then you might be planted in the snow-drifts on some

trackless waste, and were happy if you found shelter in the humblest cottage. We well remember being shut up for a couple of days, in the very primitive inn of a back-of-the-world Scottish village, with a second-class *prima donna* and the stars of her company, who had been engaged for a concert in the provinces; with a gouty laird, a jovial minister, and a couple of commercial travellers. A pleasant enough time we managed to pass; but that was thanks to the providential shuffling of social cards, for which we were duly grateful. In exceptionally severe winters, snow-blocks of the kind were everyday possibilities. In the Christmas week of 1836, for example, the London mail for the north was drifted up for the night within a few miles of the metropolis; all intercourse with the Kent and Sussex sea-coast was interrupted for a couple of days; and it was announced that no less than fourteen mail-coaches had been buried and abandoned on the different roads.

As for the revolution from travelling by road to travelling by rail it was not merely begun, but was wonderfully advanced, in the brief reign of King William. In fact, from the first it was enthusiastically supported by spirited promoters and investors; the grasping owners of landed property laid rival companies under remorseless

contribution; while the public quickly appreciated the advantages of the mechanical punctuality of frequent communications. When King William came to the throne, travelling by rail might be said to be non-existent. By the time his youthful niece succeeded him, railways were either completed or in course of construction, between the metropolis and the chief cities in the north, in the midlands, and on the southern coast. Already the coach proprietors saw that their enterprises were doomed, and accordingly they prepared to contract their operations. Coaches that ought to have been invalided were still patched up for the roads; the old drivers and guards were either retiring on their savings or seeking service with the new companies; and although the speed had slackened, accidents became more frequent. Until, finally, the only surviving parade of the diverging mails, with their red-coated guards, was before the chief hotels of Aberdeen and Chester. But at first the patrons of the new-fashioned conveyances were not spoiled by superfluous luxury. Charles Greville expresses but moderate satisfaction with his first railway journey, when he sat cramped in a "stuffy chariot for two." The second-class passengers were packed and forwarded in what "Artemus Ward" characteristically described as "strings of second-

class coffins"; while the travellers of the third class had to take their chance, crowded together like so many cattle, in seatless and roofless trucks, in which the jolting and collisions furnished fair pretexts for a free fight at any moment, even when the occupants were neither drunk nor disorderly. The mere putting up of umbrellas in a shower might be the signal for a row on some busy section of suburban traffic, such as that between New Cross and the old Bricklayers' Arms.

Now we are continually grumbling, of course, and it must be confessed that some of the railway boards give us sufficient reason; but, on the whole, we have little cause for complaint, more especially in the prospect of progress towards perfection. Look at the swift and frequent service of trains from the south to Edinburgh, with no chance of engines foundering on the weary Yorkshire wolds; with little fear of an interminable stoppage in the snow between the sea and the Cheviots. Look at the flying expresses to Holyhead and Milford, in regular and exact communication with swift and commodious steamers. Look at the service on the justly abused South-Eastern, which is supposed to take you to Paris by way of Boulogne in eight and a half hours. Look at the afternoon trains from London to the manufacturing cities of the north, in which you

may dine snugly at tables apart, and adjourn afterwards for cigar and coffee to a smoking-room. Look at the Pullman drawing-room cars, where ladies may lounge as in their boudoirs; and at the sleeping-cars, where they can put their children to bed, as if the babes were being transported in a travelling nursery. Then, so long as one travels with the "nimble shilling," the neatly dressed railway servants are models of smooth-spoken civility. The polite guard, with finger to cap, does his utmost to gratify your taste for seclusion; and the smart attendant in the *wagon-lit* guarantees the sleepers against disturbance from ticket-inspectors, and is the willing valet of all the world. On arriving at your destination the carriage-doors are beset by porters on the look-out for rugs, handbags, and tips. In these respects, though the old coachmen and guards were much "cracked up" by "Nimrod" and "Harry Hieover" and other sporting writers, we are satisfied that things have greatly changed for the better. Like some of the fashionable jockeys or like beggars set on horseback, the old coachmen were demoralised by the flattery of their betters and the servility of their inferiors. We fear that the ideal coachman of English romance was too often the swaggering bully painted by George Borrow in the 'Romany Rye.' The coachman exacted the

fee as a right which we give to the more obsequious railway guard as a matter of favour. And the railway porter, though possibly he thinks the more, says nothing uncivil if you neglect to tip him ; whereas the loafing sneak-of-all-work in the coachyard only shrank back and repressed his insolence when the muscular owner of the meerschaum-pipe had knocked him fairly out of time. So altogether it seems to be incontrovertible that we should be grateful for the luxuries of contemporary English travel.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CALÈCHE, THE VETTURINO, AND THE CIRCULAR TICKET.

SWIFT and cheap communications are admirable things; yet one cannot help looking back regretfully on the good old times of the grand tour! For a man of cultivation and leisure, with easy means and fair connections, it was the perfection of Continental travel. Provided with the best introductions, he found friends everywhere; he was welcomed in Court circles, he was cordially entreated and *fêted*, and his sojourn at each successive stage was so delightful that he was perpetually being tempted onwards, and the struggle was to turn back. From Horace Walpole down to Henry Greville, from Raikes's Journals to Lord Malmesbury's Memoirs, we are lost in the agreeable reminiscences of a cloud of capable witnesses. The card the new arrival left on the English Minister became an "open sesame" to all doors. If he had the

social qualities which of course were indispensable, he was the object of profuse hospitality, from stately evening receptions in the Faubourg St Germain or the Hofburg to the ceremonious simplicity of the quiet little German Courts. He was shooting wild boar in the Thuringian forests, or pheasants in the Bohemian woods, or hunting the bears and wolves in the Carpathians. He was eating strawberries with the fair Belgians at Boisfort, or making oyster-parties to the Lucrine Lake with Neapolitan princesses. He was picnicking among the ruined tombs and shattered aqueducts of the Roman Campagna, or fortifying himself wisely with port and quinine for wild-fowl shooting in the sedges of the Tuscan Maremma. His life, in short, was one perpetual round of invigorating or refined recreation; if he were interested in politics, he might associate with politicians or sit at the feet of world-famous statesmen; if he cared for science, he might seek the company of *savants*; and if he loved literature, he would be welcomed by great literary lights. For in those days the advent of an intelligent stranger was comparatively rare, and foreigners of age and position far superior to his own were pleased to pay him all possible attentions. As for the mere getting over the ground and laying the monotonous leagues behind him, there was a very great deal

that was agreeable in it. He was seldom in any especial hurry, and in his dreams he had never anticipated the pace of the express trains of the future. The *calèche*, the *britska*, or the light chariot turned out by the best coach-builders of Long Acre, was his self-contained travelling home, with all conceivable comforts. It was by no means cheap, for it cost some four hundred pounds; but for one who could afford the price it was well worth the money. It was furnished with the thoughtful care that came of that long experience which we bestow now on the equipment of an expedition to the Pole. There were furred wraps and swinging lamps, and "boots" or boxes, each slipping in or strapped down in its appointed place. The smart travelling servant, who sat in the rumble behind, knew exactly where to lay his hand upon everything. The pockets were stuffed with light refreshments and light literature, the umbrellas and canes were stowed away in the sword-case, and best of all, besides the indispensable passport, there was the letter of credit that gave practical *carte blanche* to draw upon Continental bankers. But with all the luxury and the comforts there was constant excitement in the changing of the night quarters and in the incidents of the road. In those days there were no organised daily services by Dover or Folkestone, and as a rule the trav-

eller shipped for his tour at one of the wharves near the Tower on a "Batavia" for Ostend or some "City of Calais" for Calais. The bachelor unattached might well congratulate himself on his light but commodious vehicle when he compared it with the ponderous conveyances of capitalists or of dignified *grands seigneurs* going abroad *en prince*. We remember when Master George Osborne started for the Rhine with his mother and "Herr Graf Lord von Sedley," how he embarked with the Bareacres family and their train of carriages, *fourgons*, &c., emblazoned with coronets and heaped with shining imperials. While a Lord Barcaces or a Marquess of Hertford travelling in state was paying the penalties of grandeur and setting his slow caravan in motion, our young friend or his courier had cleared the Custom-house and settled formalities with the police. The postilions, assured of ample *douceurs*, were joyously cracking their whips; and the *calèche*, having answered the last challenge of the sentries at the gates, was rolling merrily along the roads. It was rolling between the rows of poplars, past chateaux, churches, and cottages, through the streets of sleepy villages and the picturesque provincial towns, while the road-makers straightened themselves to attention, stared, and saluted; and the beggars greeted the passenger with prayers,

and dismissed him with blessings as he tossed small change from the windows on each steep ascent. At the mid-day halting-place he was greeted by the obsequious host, who had generally a satisfactory repast in readiness, and who prided himself on some special vintage drawn from "behind the fagots" in his cellar. Then the snug night-quarters were, as a rule, in some posting hostelry of old renown and notoriety—in a "Lion d'Or" or a "Faisan d'Argent"—and with all the sanitary defects of the French provincial hotel of the present day, it was infinitely more quaint in its venerable architecture, and far greater attention was given to the *cuisine*. The bedroom might open upon the airy gallery of timber, running round three sides of the spacious courtyard, into which the gay chariot was wheeled for the night among the coaches, the ramshackle carriages, and the lumbering waggons of the country. The tapestried chamber of honour was prepared for the distinguished guest, and the supper was served as a triumph of culinary genius. In reality, it was generally extremely good; the old inn had its gastronomic reputation to sustain, and the smiling host recommended the dishes which were the famous specialities of the house. There were the *pâtés* which had gone far towards making its renown; there were carp from the old con-

vent moat or eels from the mill-stream, "accommodated" with spices and sweet herbs after some family receipt. As for the *cru* of venerable Burgundy or Bordeaux, or the very potable "little wine" from the neighbouring *coteau* that did duty in the absence of anything better, the host would rub his hands when he drew the cork, and express a hope that "Monsieur would tell his friends of it." So Monsieur, supping well and sleeping better, passed pleasantly on from stage to stage. As for the hotels of the great capitals, in these, of course, he was in clover,—in Meurice's, at Paris, though contemptuously designated the English caravanseraï in 'Tom and Jerry'; at the "Archduke Charles," in the sombre Carinthian Street of Vienna; or in the "Londra" of Signor Pastrini, in Rome, immortalised by Dumas in 'Monte Cristo.'

The foreign hosts, of course, made their money by the English aristocrat; yet, though they may have advanced a couple of hundred per cent on the prime cost of provisions, the traveller was not inordinately fleeced. For the more modest folk who contented themselves with the public conveyances, life on the Continent was then a miracle of cheapness. Lever knew the life well; though lavish enough personally, he has described a little later how the sorely tried Kenny Dodd happened upon an occasional oasis of

economy in rural German inns where he enjoyed all the local luxuries for next to nothing. The rascally Grog Davis when in hiding, hit upon a paradise in the shape of a German *Café de Paris* among the most sequestered beauties of the Rhine, where the charges were as primitive as the simple-minded natives. Sad memory carries one back to luxuries in the Salzkammergut and the Bavarian Highlands—trout and game and exquisitely dressed poultry and veal cutlets and venison pasties, washed down by Austrian wines with body and bouquet, for a sum-total of something like three shillings a-day. Those were the times when the best hotels in the very best situations at Brussels or at Florence were as reasonable as second-class boarding-houses nowadays, while the guests were positively constrained to gorge themselves, like so many geese, condemned to liver complaints and foredoomed to Strasburg *pâtés*. The cost of public conveyances was cheap as well, and assuredly you had a deal of travelling for your money. I do not mean to deny the drawbacks and disagreeables; but one saw the country thoroughly and to the best advantage, while being taught invaluable lessons of patience—although, indeed, it was comparatively easy to practise patience till the railways had begun to demoralise us for the roads. In the

old diligence, next to the *coupé*, the seats in the *intérieur* were the dearest; there you were shut up in a certain dignity and in the best of company. The places in the *banquette* were the most economical and by far the pleasantest in fine weather, for you admired the beauties from a commanding elevation, and shared the spare sheepskins through the night with the friendly conductor. As for the cramped *rotonde* behind, it was a rolling pandemonium, where you had the choice of keeping all the windows hermetically sealed or of being smothered in the clouds of dust cast back by the hoofs and wheels. There are hosts of pleasant associations which rise up with the spectres of those dust-encrusted old diligences, which seemed never to have been washed since they left the builders, and were the types of leisurely, relentless, never-ending motion. We can recall how we would tumble down to stretch our legs as we cut off the sharp corners by the steep mountain path while the vehicle dragged up behind, along the easier zig-zags. We well remember the magnificent views that surprised us from commanding shoulders and ridges as we looked out through the moving vapours or from beneath flushing sunsets over snow-fields, or deep gorges shadowed by dark pine-woods, or over broad plains bestudded with campaniles and festooned with the foliage of

the trellised vines. We have travelled through Alpine passes when the midnight blackness was broken by the forked flashes of the lightning; when Alp was answering to Alp in the deafening peals of the thunder. We have travelled through the passes in drifting snow, when we had temporarily exchanged wheeled diligences for sledges; and though we may have suffered severely in body and mind when admiration of the wild passions of Nature began to pall on us, how delightful it was to try to feel the half-frozen feet and stagger in to the stove in the genial mountain guest-chamber, where hot coffee was steaming in the great white basins it was impossible for the numbed fingers to lay hold of! There used to be picturesque and dramatic scenes besides, though they fell short of terror or grandeur—as when one would watch the long team of eight or ten pair of mules toiling up the slopes of the Mont Cenis from Susa to Lanslebourg, with the gleam of the coach-lamps and the glare of the torches reflected from each buckle of the harness; or when a still longer team of mules would be almost brought to a standstill in the sleet and snows of the Sierra Morena, and the soldiers retained as an escort against the brigands were striving to keep their blood in circulation by helping the *mozos*—in velveteen breeches and scarlet sashes—to be-

labour the miserable animals. Nor were the difficulties confined to the actual travelling. You had to cope with calculations in the queerest coinage, when there was a promiscuous mingling of pieces of debased currency from all the adjacent countries. Apparently international comity had come to a common understanding as to easy swindling of the stranger. Thus there were florins on one bank of the Rhine and Prussian thalers on the other; while in Italy each petty State had its particular mint; and no one but a practised polyglot antiquary could make heads or tails of the inscriptions. There was the passport system, which was far from a formality in those days. You might be subjected to a strict personal scrutiny at any moment, and by some unfortunate coincidence in your written description might be arrested as a criminal or notorious political offender. The very name on the lining of one's hat might be gravely compromising; and once we were detained in Milan for a day, because we had unhappily bought a wide-awake of a Signor Mazzini. In any case, and in each town where you stopped, the voucher must be handed over for fees and verification; and if you decided to go and reclaim it in person, you had to dance attendance in a dingy antechamber in the

strongly scented crowd of citizens, peasants, and sneering *laquais-de-place*.

Talking of passports and the confusion of coinage suggests the vetturino, for it was in Italy that confusion and the passport regulations were most vexatious, and the vetturino was an Italian institution *par excellence*. It was doomed by the railways, and it is gone with the old hosteleries, where it was in the habit of halting and baiting. In the days when it flourished it took four full days in travelling after the Carnival from Rome to Naples, and five days at the least in labouring leisurely along the Riviera from Genoa to Nice on our homeward way after Holy week. There were seats for four within, and there were seats for five without, in the hooded rumble and the roomy *impériale*. There were four horses, with their fantastic head-plumes of feathers, and their gaudy nettings, which, with the coverings of green boughs, protected them against the horse-flies. We contracted with the driver for board and lodging, as well as for due and punctual delivery; so for once we could cast all cares behind, for we knew we should fare as well—or as ill—as the more extravagant occupants of post-carriages. And, on the whole, the fare was good rather than bad, while it was often characteristic or classical. There were strong and

savoury fillets of wild boar from the Pontine Marshes or the Maremma, served in a piquant sauce of barberries; followed by thrushes at Terracina or Mola di Gaeta, such as Samuel Rogers has immortalised. There were shrivelled grapes and figs from the orchards and vineyards; there were wool-stoppered flasks of Chianti, and cobwebbed bottles of Falernian. We smell at this moment the resin from the pine-woods, embalming the languid air, in the warmth of the noon-day sunshine; we see visions of silvery mountain-tops standing out in the soft moonlight; we hear the low murmur of the Mediterranean waves breaking along the shingly beach to the sighs of a rising night breeze. And the vanished vetturino is sadly suggestive of much else that has been swept away by the besom of improvement. It would be sad to expatiate on a subject which is inexhaustible. Where is the Paris we used to know so well, whence even the Tuileries have disappeared, leaving scarcely a sign behind them? The revolutionary Haussmann has found desolating rivals and imitators all over the Continent. There was no possibility of spoiling the great King Frederick's barrack-like city on the Spree, and at Munich the extremely eccentric King Louis had the sense to build his new town by

the side of the old one. But what have the new municipality been doing at Papal Rome, where the polishing has almost kept pace with the abolishing? Florence, at the cost of many of its most picturesque antiquities, became the temporary capital of the kingdom, only to be deserted; and Venice, though delivered from the foreigner's rule, is now the port of departure for the English P. & O., while its once silent canals and voiceless gondoliers are wakened up by the plying of steam-launches and the screams of the steam-whistle. From Rouen to Vienna, from Amsterdam to Trieste, there is nothing but promiscuous wreckage of the past, with the promotion of new "works of public utility." It should be gratifying, but nevertheless it is depressing. The vetturino has gone with much it used to represent, and it has given place to the cheap circular ticket which reflects the popularising spirit of the age. The circular-tripper sees a modernised Europe, in which all kinds of cosmopolitan conveniences are provided for him, and in which at every turn he may appreciate the monotonous adaptability of modern progress. He steams up the Rhine between a double row of brand-new villas; he finds a beer-house or a restaurant in climbing to each shattered keep; he scales the spurs of the Alps and the cone of

Vesuvius by the aid of ordinary or atmospheric or funicular railways. And though science and enterprise have already done so much for him, we may be sure that we are only at the beginning of the end, and that the crowning triumphs of the commonplace are yet to astound us.

CHAPTER IX.

SAILS, PADDLES, AND SCREWS.

A GLANCE at the advertising columns of the 'Times' in 1836 should send a thrill of gratitude to the hearts of the globe-trotters of 1886. It is like sitting in a snug room over a "sea-coal fire," and listening to the blasts that are beating against the windows. Those who go down to the sea in our great steamers must face storms that send the billows surging abaft the funnels, and stand rockings upon the bosom of the mighty deep that make them curse their unkindly nurse. At all events, nowadays they know that, if they must cross the ocean, they could hardly be made more comfortable. Possibly people may have thought the same in 1836, and we can only admire the benignance of Providence which mercifully tempers the wind to weather-beaten lambs. In 1836 "swift sailings" of the best teak-built ships, of 400 and 500 tons, were advertised for Calcutta and

Bombay. In 1836 there is an announcement of the despatch of a copper-bottomed packet-brig of 142 tons register for Madeira, "with excellent accommodation for passengers." Imagine a consumptive invalid taking his passage now for the Islands of the Blest in a cockle-shell of 142 tons register! That sort of craft might be all very well for the hardy mariners who used to grope their way on exploring expeditions towards the Pole through the fogs and the ice-floes; but for a patient apprehensive of the rupture of blood-vessels, it was staking madly against the imminent chances of sudden death. In 1838 there is a glowing account in the 'Annual Register' of the launch of the British Queen. "This immense steamship is intended to carry passengers between London and New York. Her length exceeds that of any vessel in the British navy by 35 feet." As for the power, proportions, and capacity of that "immense" vessel, her length was 275 feet, she had engines of 500 horse power, and she carried 600 tons of coals, with 500 tons of cargo. Indeed, in those days, with the delays of long ocean-passages, we can scarcely be said to have spanned the abysses dividing us from distant countries and colonies. The wealthy West Indian planters seldom visited the old home more than once or twice in a prosperous lifetime; while civilians or soldiers scorch-

ing in Hindustan took out a three years' furlough after ten years of baking. Naturally they needed all the time to recruit a liver enlarged like that of any Strasburg goose. "Tom Cringle" tells how, about sixty years ago, he boarded one of the "magnificent West Indiamen" which had been plundered by pirates and subsequently abandoned. The midshipman, accustomed to the accommodation of his Majesty's men-of-war, with the bunkers and lockers of the odoriferous cockpit, was much impressed with the splendour of the upholstery and decorations. There were gold mouldings and plate-glass mirrors; there were thick silken hangings and sumptuous carpets, while a grand piano stood open in the saloon. Yet, after all, that "magnificent ship," which had to weather half-hurricanes and run the risk of tornados, did not measure so much as 500 tons. At that time, when cadets from Addiscombe, or young writers from Haileybury, secured their berths long beforehand for Bombay or the Hoogly, the costly nautical outfit was a matter for grave consideration. The leisurely voyage round the Cape would last for four months at the least. The cabin in the Lord Wellesley or the Bombay Castle supplied nothing but the wooden panelling and the bare bedstead. Its temporary tenants had to buy sheets, blankets, and the cabin furniture. They had to lay

in, besides, endless stores of body-linen and cotton suits, remembering the heats of the tropics which made constant changes of raiment indispensable. And although the saloon table was spread with sufficient liberality, they deemed themselves lucky when they came across a luxurious Collector of Boggleywallah like Jos Sedley, who had treasures of soda-water and light claret at the disposition of his special cronies. It is true that for youngsters of an oriental temperament, who loved the fair sex, tobacco, and the *dolce far niente*, there was no lack of quiet recreation. In all the charm of snatching at forbidden fruit, they could flirt on the sly with the batches of marriageable young women consigned to the Indian markets, and committed to the care of the captain. The sporting characters could fish from the "dolphin-striker" in the frequent calms, admiring the colours and eccentricities of the exceedingly queer fishes they dragged on deck; and they could indulge at leisure and *ad libitum* in chess, cards, and backgammon. Yet, for the most part, unless entangled in the anxieties of an impracticable engagement, they must have been pretty well bored to death before they sighted the Malabar or Coromandel coasts, or threaded the wreck-strewn intricacies of the Sunderbunds. After the solemn leave-taking dinner at "The Falcon" at Graves-

end, they might be baffled for many days in the chops of the Channel before the lights of the Eddystone died down in the distance. And they could sympathise with the feelings of Vanderdecken, the profane Flying Dutchman, upon casting anchor at last in the shelter of Table Bay. They might be kept standing off and on the surfs of Madeira for ten days or more, while taking in pipes of wine for the Indian mess-tables. Yet they were not altogether without the excitements of danger, more welcome to the dashing young soldier in embryo than to the ladies and the bilious civilians. For pirates were still occasionally to be met with in the indifferently guarded Southern seas; and Captain Meadows Taylor, in the 'Story of my Life,' tells how only sixty years ago he was chosen a captain of volunteers in the mizzen-top, with six stout boys placed under his command. Nor were precautions of the kind by any means superfluous, for the ship narrowly escaped an encounter with a piratical felucca. Had these complacent and contented gentlemen foreseen the time when men could take a six-weeks' leave from India, forgetting that ignorance is bliss, like Job they might have cursed the day in which they were born.

Mr Wilson Hyde, in his very interesting book on 'The Royal Mail,' gives statistics of the times occupied to some foreign stations "out and home

again" by the letter-posts about five-and-fifty years ago, and they sound almost incredible. For Jamaica, 112 days; to Malta, 90 days; to Brazil, 140 days; and to America, as he assures us, 105 days. He adds that there were then no regular packets to China, New South Wales, Sierra Leone, and many parts of South America. The passengers, like the mail-bags, were compelled to take their chance of the casual sailings of ships in freight. Now the swiftly successive despatches are arranged to an hour, and the time out to Jamaica is 18 days; to Brazil, 21; to Lisbon, 3; while to the United States the maximum is 7 days. It was in 1838 that all commercial men were astir from Broadway to the Long Island to see the first of the packets which steamed across the Atlantic. Mr Gallenga, the well-known 'Times' correspondent, relates in his Reminiscences how he chanced to be there on the day when the Sirius came in. It was on the 23d of April, and the Sirius had sailed from Cork on the 4th. By a somewhat remarkable coincidence, the Great Western arrived within fifteen hours, having started from the Severn four days later. That was the small beginning of the day of great things, and for many years afterwards men made the passage of the Atlantic with mingled feelings of misery and terror. Dickens's readers will remember the dramatic

account of his voyage in the *Britannia*, when he went to the States on his first round of readings. The *Britannia* made the passage in 21 days, on an average of $8\frac{1}{2}$ knots. She met with horrible weather, the decks were swept by the seas, and the waves, breaking down the companions, set everything afloat in the cabins. But what nearly scared the impressionable novelist out of his senses was the imminent danger of conflagration. The labouring engines sent flames up the funnels, and clouds of sparks and burning cinders were flying about among the ship-timbers, which we should have thought must have been sufficiently saturated with sea-water to set all danger of combustion at defiance. There are still inevitable hazards in the crossing—hazards which have been aggravated by fierce competition. The most powerful modern steamships are racing perpetually against each other and against time, through fogs, in calms and blinding snow-drifts, along the narrow and well-defined water-way of traffic, which sights, then skirts, a most perilous coast. But these steam-propelled sea-monsters are as much of floating palaces as anything that goes down to the ocean can be made. In striking contrast to the “immense” British *Queen*, they may be of 8000 to 9000 tons burthen, and of 12,000 to 13,000 actual horse-power. With any ordinary vessel coming unhappily athwart

their bows, it is the odds of an elephant "colliding" with an ox. The Guion and the National Lines date only from 1863; the White Star from 1870; though the Cunard has been carrying the mails since the Britannia took them in 1840. It is the competition, the cheapness, the facilities, and the comparative comforts offered by the great lines, which have stimulated excessive emigration; which have relieved starving Ireland of its superabundant population; and which, at the same time, have done much to complicate the Irish question by creating the richer and resentful Ireland beyond the Atlantic. When Martin Chuzzlewit and Mark Tapley booked their passage in the Screw, even without "the elements combining" against her, the miseries of the wearisome middle passage were extreme, as the charges for the slow tortures were far from moderate. Whereas nowadays the State-assisted Scotch crofter or the tenant of a Connaught hill-holding, as soon as he has shaken off the sorrows of sea-sickness, revels in delicacies of which he never had dreamed. Imagine a hard-favoured Highlandman fresh from short commons in his misty glens of Skye, or a half-grown gossoon from the bogs of Connemara, with indefinite arrears of eating to make up and an appetite keenly edged by the Atlantic breezes, sitting down to the succession of bountiful repasts provided by the great shipping associations.

If the catering be as good as it sounds, it must be a veritable miracle of cheapness. The National Line, which seems to touch the lowest depths of economy, very recently—if not at present—was carrying its steerage passengers for £3 a-head. And it promised an “abundance of fresh provisions, all of the best quality, cooked and served out by the Company’s servants three times daily.” The Red Star charges were a trifle more, but its *menus* are given more definitely. At dinner there is boiled pork, salt beef, &c., with vegetables, rice and raisins, vegetable-soups and promiscuous puddings. The supper is almost as substantial, but varied with such lighter dishes as Irish stew. It is needless to indicate the effects of these wonderful facilities towards emigration. With children charged half-price, and infants taken for nothing, a spirited man with the most modest savings and slight Government help may cast all his cares and anxieties behind him, and renew his strength in America, or even the more remote Australasia, in the confidence that steadiness will ensure success.

We have been hurried down the fast-flowing flood-tide of emigration to the days of the screws ; but we must tack back for a somewhat regretful retrospect of more leisurely sea-life on board the old-fashioned paddles. For people who are not especially pressed for time, and who loved, so far

as might be possible, to imagine themselves still on land, we hold that to have been the golden age of sea-touring. For the paddles not only steadied the ship in place of shaking her, but implied a stable breadth of build which was greatly conducive to comfort, with a proportionate commodiousness of accommodation; although, of course, they were comfortless enough when steam communications were in their infancy. When there were already regular steamers departing from the Tower Wharf to the Kentish watering-places, Charles Lamb in the poetry of his conservatism looks back lovingly on the old Margate Hoy. "Can I forget thee, thou old Margate Hoy, with thy weather-beaten, sun-burnt captain and his rough accommodations—ill exchanged for the foppery and fresh-water niceness of the modern steam-packet? . . . With the gales of heaven thou wentest swimmingly, or, when it was their pleasure, stoodest still with sailor-like patience." Though, to tell the truth, the foppery and fresh-water niceness can have been only comparative. At least we may surmise as much from the mere name of the Ferret, borne by one of the packets plying between Dover and Calais. We can well conceive what a Ferret must have been—small, slender, and terribly tucked up in the waist, poking her sharp nose through the swamping seas of the

Channel, and sneaking rather than standing into Calais harbour in the depressing embrace of the limpet-encrusted jetties. The *Ferret* could not have been much of an improvement on the schooner-rigged "Dover packet" earlier known. For even the *Ferrets*, drawing little water as they did, could seldom come alongside the piers at Dover, and the passengers, sick and exceedingly sorry for themselves, were tumbled down into small boats like so many cases of claret, even in the gales of March or the snows of December. If they hit off Dover in the dark, we presume they made the best of it on the horschair cabin sofas, and waited to disembark in the daylight. Thackeray, when he went to Ireland in 1842, tells how he got into Dublin Bay after sundown, to be awakened at five next morning by the crew clearing out the mail-bags. Contrast that state of things with the present clockwork of the runs from Holyhead, when the *Ulster* or *Leinster* is driven relentlessly ahead, and each precious second is severely economised.

On the broad Atlantic, when the tempests were unchained and the crested billows rolling mountains high, we grant that the paddles may have had their disadvantages, more especially to nervous travellers. In that voyage in the *Britannia* which Dickens has made memorable, he tells picturesquely how "the planking

had been torn sheer away"; how "the wheels were exposed and bare, and they whirled and dashed their spray about the decks at random." And tourists can remember how the swift river-boats on the Danube used to be spun round bodily in the rapid stream, and brought up against the projecting landing-places in Servia and Wallachia with a mighty rending of wood and an occasional smashing of metal which sent tremors through the nerves of sensitive females. Nevertheless, on waters that were land-locked or comparatively quiet, the motion was as smooth as might be under the circumstances. We may take the Mediterranean steamers of twenty or thirty years ago as types of all that was most comfortable and home-like in the mercantile marine. There were the vessels of the P. and O., for example, though they concerned themselves much more with passengers than with merchandise. On board the roomy but graceful Ganges or the Jumna you had all the luxuries of a steam-yacht with the advantage of greatly superior size. There was room enough in the spacious cabins beneath the wide decks, if you were not caught in the rush of the Indians who were coming and going through the season. The society was sure to be agreeably mixed, for there were people of the world for all the Mediterranean ports, from Lisbon to Alexandria.

The tables were spread with the free-hearted liberality of a fine old Company, all of the olden time; there were sherry, claret, and pale ale *ad libitum*. If you pleased, you might eat yourself into chronic dyspepsia or drink yourself into a brain fever; and then there was none of that oriental surveillance of the fair sex which tormented travellers on board the East Indiaman circumnavigating the Cape. But then the P. and O. had a practical monopoly. The Briton who respected himself would seldom travel even by the luxurious French Messageries; for he held in supreme contempt the foreign "kickshaws," though far better adapted to the latitudes and their climates. In that golden age the P. and O. could afford to be generous, for it controlled the market and fixed its own tariffs. As for the carriage of goods, it scarcely stooped to it, except for such valuable articles as silk and precious stones, made up in compact little packages and charged proportionately. Now all has been revolutionised, and the fine fleet has been reconstructed, with an indefinite capacity for stowing away bags of cotton in the holds. We have made pleasant voyages, too, in the Mediterranean Cunard boats, when, a primary consideration being the killing of time, we were making deliberate observations on men and cities. The fare was simple and more than

solid; and as passengers were merely thrown in by way of make-weights, the company was small if not always select. Yet we have met many clever and cultivated men and women on board; popular clergymen ordered on a slow sea-trip to restore the shattered health; or Americans who manfully, like Washington Irving, set their faces against the travel-fever of their dollar-hunting countrymen. Going to bed after grog, cigars, and conversation under the star-spangled skies, with some wild line of headlands showing up in the moonlight, you would be awakened in the morning by the trampling on the decks, by the groaning of the windlass and the running-out of the chain-cable, when you would turn out to see the stir in some picturesque harbour, with streets rising tier upon tier above the bustling quays, and with a coronet of towers and campaniles or of palm-trees and minarets. From the decks of the Cunarders or from those of the Austrian Lloyd boats, in the Greek Isles or along the rugged Illyrian coast, we can recall many a startling and enchanting surprise when in scenes of which we had been talking and dreaming, realities surpassed imagination. We know that we still have these lines of steamers trading among commercial nooks and corners of the world, and discharging their cargoes in half-forgotten har-

bours ; but we fear that travellers neglect them in the feverish craving for speed. The long, deep, narrow - waisted screw, constructed and closely packed afore and abaft on principles the most severely economical, is the steamship of the present, and probably of the future. It is vain to regret it in the light of the fact that our trade has increased sixfold in the last forty years ; but we confess that these screws grate on our susceptibilities, as they have shaken our body and disturbed our slumbers when we have been condemned to a cabin immediately above them.

CHAPTER X.

LONDON LIFE IN THE LAST GENERATION.

THE life of the man of fashion in the London of fifty years ago was far faster and more full of excitement than at present. The world of fashion was smaller and more select ; everybody who was anybody may be said to have known something of each other. At the same time, there were, of course, an infinity of sets, although sympathy in tastes and pursuits often levelled social distinctions. The pace was severe in every way ; when it was the habit to turn night into day, to dine heavily, to drink deep and long, weak constitutions went to the wall. Never were more striking contrasts to be seen of wealth living with impecuniosity in the same careless indulgence. Once brilliant notorieties dropped behind and disappeared ; they went to the country or the churchyard ; to the debtors' prisons or to Boulogne ; they were scarcely missed and seldom regretted by their dearest friends.

As "Nimrod" said in his famous 'Quarterly' article of the man down in the ditch when the fliers were speculating as to his identity, "the pace was too good to inquire." The brother of a duke had been brought up with him in the same house at Eton, and they had gone together to Christ Church or Trinity. The brothers came from College to the town with the same tastes and associates. But there was this slight difference between them, that one had a practically limitless rent-roll, and the other perhaps a paltry £400 a-year. The iron and the earthen pots were whirled along down the rapids on the same swift current, and the vessels of earthenware were perpetually being smashed. No doubt the same sort of thing still goes on to some extent; but there are essential differences. Now no man of ordinary strength of will need be driven into extravagance almost in spite of himself; and a youth of position will find society respecting him, even if he tries to keep within inadequate means. Now those ridiculous barriers of class prejudice have been broken down which denied the aristocracy those privileges of trade that have made men of the middle classes peers, capitalists, and potentates. Now the sons of dukes may deal in cotton or dry goods, and the heirs to earldoms, for the sake of the business they bring, are welcomed to lucrative partner-

ships on the Stock Exchange. They are all the more considered in Mayfair or Belgravia if their birth be backed up by balances at their bankers. Fifty years ago the son of a nobleman might fill a fat family living, or he might go into a crack cavalry corps or the Rifles without social derogation. Even then he was thrown among all the temptations of the time, and if he hoped to live on pay and allowance and avoid running into debt, he must resign himself to the ascetic self-denial of a St Anthony. The fast youth who came up to London in the exuberance of health and high animal spirits was launched on a life of feverish idleness, or he had the desultory occupations of a commission in the Guards. In either case he was thrown from the first with rich and reckless companions. Everything in the way of pleasure or dissipation cost more then than now. Vice scarcely needed to throw the flimsiest veil of decency over its proceedings, and the tone of the best feminine society was scandalously tolerant. Little dinners were made up for Richmond or Greenwich, and when the weather permitted, the very mixed parties were ostentatiously driven down on the roofs of drags. The well-appointed drags and conveyances cost considerably more than our return tickets by rail; and the dinners, with their delicacies out of season, were far from frugal. Yet these more

obvious outgoings were comparatively insignificant items. For the sirens of the stage and the ballet were only to be wooed with lavish presents ; and young *roués* on their promotion, competing with their seniors of fortune, showered bouquets, bracelets, and rare laces on the ladies who had the caprices, if not the charms, of Cleopatras. They might have had pearls melted in their champagne had they cared to indulge a fancy of which they had never heard ; for every mad folly made a *furor*, and the ambition of each rake was ephemeral notoriety.

It is evident that, with everyday habits like these, the man with a modest allowance must speedily come to the end of his tether. Credit with the most long-suffering tradesman has its limits, although the charges may leave a broad margin for bad debts. But there were resources open to the impecunious and embarrassed which made ultimate ruin absolutely assured. It was a time of betting and gambling, of deep play at the clubs and of heavy books on the races. Disraeli describes his "Young Duke," lured into a private hell at Brighton, losing £100,000 at a sitting, when the players, unshaven and ghastly towards the evening after the second sleepless night, were buried to their knees in a litter of cards, like the Lord March or the Charles Fox of a former generation. White's, where three

black balls were fatal to a candidate, set a sad example to other clubs. Crockford's was in full swing: the ballot there was yearly becoming more a matter of form, and there was less and less difficulty in obtaining admission. No system could have been better devised for promoting the business by which the ex-fishmonger grew fabulously rich. It was the fashion to dine there; the dinners given gratis were admirably served; the wines of many vintages circulated freely. The courteous entertainer did the honours to his guests, who felt bound to recompense him for his disinterested hospitality. Flushed with wine and warmed by good-fellowship, they left the coffee and liqueurs for the hazard-table. Ready money was not a necessity; when the cashier knew his customers, cheques were exchanged for counters. When a simple signature replenished his funds, the adventurer out of luck was little likely to pull up. The more desperate his circumstances, the more doggedly he clung to the last faint hope of retrieving them. When the late awakening on the next afternoon brought cooler reflection, he remembered that debts of honour must be met. Then came the inevitable interviews with the usurers, who could have easily accommodated him, if they had only time to "turn themselves," but who found it impossible to make an advance on the

nail. The hard bargaining followed those invariable preliminaries: the heir to a fair estate who could subscribe *post-obits* came off comparatively well, at least till his visits were unduly frequent; but the younger brothers, with merely a contingent possibility of their debts being settled for the credit of the family, were remorselessly flayed with extortionate percentages. For the one and the other it was but a question of time. If they were not tapped on the shoulder unawares, and consigned to the sponging-house or the prison, there was a moonlight flitting across the Channel, to disreputable beggary in France or the Low Countries. But men who did not aspire to membership at Crockford's, had equal facilities for coming to grief. There were any number of quiet hells in the purlieus of the Haymarket. In these, too, wines, spirits, and suppers were liberally provided, free of charge. The young squire from the country, the gay undergraduate from the university, the regimental officer up in town on short leave, had only to secure the guidance of a familiar of one of these fatal establishments—no difficult matter in the hotels of Covent Garden, or in the military clubs, where half the young fellows who dined and drank were bent upon "making a night of it." The speculators, when they passed the outer portals of Meadow's or similar

haunts, were surveyed through a wicket in an inner door of solid oak, strongly clenched with iron. If the examination proved satisfactory, they were heartily greeted, to the clattering of knives and forks and the drawing of corks, to the raking in and paying out of coin across the tables, to the "Seven's the main" of the caster, and the "Gentlemen, make your game" of the groom-porter. And there were lower depths still in the neighbourhood of Leicester Square, where almost destitute foreign refugees and native tatterdemalions, who might have fallen, Lucifer-like, from very different spheres, went to hazard the last half-crowns they had raised from the relics of their wardrobes. Even gentlemen in more reputable sets were habitually in chronic difficulties. Cards came in as a matter of course, to kill the later hours of the evening, when nobody cared to swallow more claret. Whist is a game of skill as well as luck, and it ought to bring a good average player nearly home at the end of the year. But with a pony on the rubber and £5 points, with betting on the odd trick thrown into the bargain, there must be capital if you are to keep a calculating head, and wait calmly for the turn of a run of ill-luck. Many a poor man of fashion who never touched a dice-box, and who avoided the wild chances of loo or lansquenet, was being quietly

bled to death among associates of unimpeachable respectability. Nor could he count on them for help in the hour of his extremity, when, threatened by an arrest that would have brought his creditors unanimously down upon him, "a trifle in time would have tided him over." "Every man for himself" is the maxim of the play-table; long experience and worldly wisdom have alike demonstrated its sagacity. For there is slight possibility of permanently helping the gambler, and the boon companions most deeply imbued with the taste are the last to believe in vows of abstinence.

Those habits of nocturnal dissipation, however, were but one side of the life of our fathers in London, as it was decidedly the least respectable. In the card-room, at the dinner-table, over the bishop and broiled bones, they worked indefatigably for the almshouse and the gout, but they were at least as manly in their out-of-doors habits as their sons, and had a more catholic devotion to sport of all kinds. They kept their studs, nearly thoroughbred, stalled in the shires, though they might have to post down to a meet of the Pytchley or the Quorn. After a night of racket and soul-harrowing sensations over the dice, and the formality of a flying visit to the sheets, they would be up again before the sparrows of St James's. Tumbling into the "old

yellow" that had pulled up before the door, lighting the cigars that had barely been extinguished, they were jolted at a hand-gallop into Berks or Bucks for a meet of his Majesty's stag-hounds. So the necessities of their existence were extraordinarily expensive. Then, next to the gambling which came into the everyday routine, racing was the grand object of interest. Though there were Gullys and other self-made leviathans in those days, the Turf was much more generally supported by gentlemen. If a man could not afford to keep a stable himself, he went in for joint-stock partnerships in particular animals; and, if he did neither, he was always on the look-out for a good thing which might bring pecuniary salvation when he most sorely needed it. Some stable secret was communicated on sure authority, and he launched out on the long odds, leaving it to the turn of circumstances whether he should hedge and be safe or "stand the cracker." With so much depending on the eventful issue, it is needless to dilate on the lively interest he took in the training of a Caravan or a Chanticleer. The notice of a trial with some well-known performer, the rumour of a nasty cough or a strained sinew, would send him on the shortest notice to the trainer's on the Surrey downs or the more distant Yorkshire heaths. The effeminate voluptuary would rise

to the occasion, and be as careless of discomfort or fatigue as any case-hardened king's messenger. He would be out at daybreak of a foggy November morning enjoying existence and the unaccustomed exhilaration, when the enemies—scouts and touts told off to keep a watch on the establishment—were shivering in the drifting sleet as they skulked under shelter of the bushes.

The Red House up the river was in great favour; for pigeon-shooting, if less popular, was as fashionable as at present. Honourable ambitions aspired, though unsuccessfully, to rival the feats of the Rosses and Osbaldistones; and at all events, the matches as they were shot off were always excuses for merrymaking. But perhaps the especial characteristic of the manhood of the day was the patronage it bestowed on the prize-ring, and the fellowship it extended to the heroes of that genuinely British sport. It was the old story of the aristocracy of imperial Rome stooping to pet and feast the gladiators. Like Lord Byron, each muscular man of fashion was in the habit of breathing himself in sharp sets-to with the gloves, and the only branch of his education he continued to cultivate was the noble art of self-defence. This knowledge often proved extremely serviceable when, carrying away sundry bottles of champagne and claret after dinner, he was wont to mix in all kinds of

company and get into every variety of scrape. Those were the golden days of the Ring; and the prize-fighter of popular renown who had invested his savings in a public-house did better from the financial point of view than many learned professors at the universities. His afternoons were devoted to giving well-remunerated lessons, at which application was made agreeable by the beer and tobacco; and towards the small hours he received his patrons in a back parlour, where, seated in the master's private box, they looked on at the brisk sparring-bouts from behind the tankards of champagne-cup. There was a roped arena in the centre, and the rest of the room was thrown open to ruffians and amateurs of many conditions. The light weights, the middle weights, and the heavy weights paired off; when angry passions rose too high, when a sparrer was knocked out of time, or when a head "in chancery" was being hopelessly fibbed, the command was given to "walk about," and the combatants were rewarded with showers of small coin. It was generally at these snug nocturnal gatherings that the serious matches were got up, and enthusiastic admirers found the stakes for the Chelsea Chicken or the Brummagem Bruiser. In the palmy days of the profession, when the police were either impotent or indifferent, the pitched encounters, as previously arranged, would

come off at Moulsey Hurst, or down in the Essex Marshes; the aristocrats, who drove thither in their drags or chaises, were comfortably seated between the ropes and the outer ring, and sat tolerably safe under the guardianship of the *protégés* of the P.R., who had been selected by the fraternity as special constables. As for the relatively respectable spectators who could not, or would not, pay for reserved places, they wisely left their watches at home, and "discounted" the chances of being hustled and robbed. Yet, although these meetings were the reverse of select, on the whole and unless there was a free fight over suspicions of a cross, they were decently conducted, considering all things. It was the interest of the eminent members of the Ring to make things peaceable and pleasant for their lavish patrons.

CHAPTER XI.

RECREATIONS IN LONDON.

ONE thing we have been learning in the last fifty years, and that is the necessity for recreation. In former days there was literally no holiday-making, except at rare and old-fashioned festivals like Christmas. Men of business, with money in the bank, might break away from work for a time, but clerks and mechanics were kept close to the mill in the dull routine of monotonous labour. The hours of toil were excessive, even for women and children, before Lord Shaftesbury undertook his crusade for their emancipation. Yet it was not altogether either the selfishness of employers or old custom that was to blame, for the difficulties in the way of holiday-making were immense. There were no suburban railways; travelling was tedious and expensive. The youth who came to town from the remote country might have to bid a long farewell to his people and his

father's house. With a furlough of some forty-eight hours at the utmost, it was impossible to coach it to Cumberland or Cornwall, even if the cost of the journey had not been an insuperable obstacle. The artisan turned loose for the day lost his wages and gained little. When stage-coaches brought up the City merchants to their offices from Hampstead, Streatham, or Wimbledon, and when most of the seats were secured for regular customers, there were no possible means of making a general exodus. It may be said that the only entertainments for the working classes in London were the churches, the public-houses, and the gin-palaces. When the more rational and frugal-minded of them declined to get drunk, they had to choose between lounging about the streets or sitting at home with the squalling children. Dickens painted the typical bricklayer, enjoying his quiet Sunday, by leaning against a post in corduroy breeches, with his hands in his pockets, his dog at his heels, and a short pipe between his teeth. Even their social superiors were not much better provided for, although we may assume that the supply of entertainment was equal to the demand, and that the habits of our married fathers were dully domestic. Turning back to the advertising files of the 'Times' in 1836, we find that there were only four operas or theatres advertised

in West London—Covent Garden, Her Majesty's in the Haymarket, the Olympic, and the Victoria (late the Coburg). Places of innocent recreation were scarce, but those on the borderland between decency and dissipation were tolerated and freely patronised. The parson from the country might be puzzled as to passing the evening, but the fast man about town knew how "to make a night of it." The once famous gardens of Ranelagh had disappeared, but they had been replaced by the dazzling fascinations of lamp-lighted Vauxhall and Cremorne. Then, and for full thirty years afterwards, the Harry Fokers and the Griggses, after "toddling about" the lobbies of the theatres, and "giving a hand" or flinging a bouquet to the favourite actresses with whom they dined at Richmond and Blackwall, tumbled into cabs and were whirled southwards. They might dance with respectable young women like Fanny Bolton, or rotate round the orchestra in the mazy waltz in the embrace of professional sirens. If the weather were unfavourable, or in the cheerless nights of the winter, they turned into the cheery Cave of Harmony or the Coal Hole, consoling themselves with chops, kidneys, and bitter beer, and chorus-sing the loose minstrelsy of popular improvisatores. Absolute freedom of programme was the order of the night; licence and personalities

were everywhere in the ascendant. We all remember the magnificent indignation of Colonel Newcome, when he beat a précipitate retreat with his innocent boy, on his rude awakening from dreams of rapturous delight by a startling outburst of harmonious obscenity. In short, in those days the public were careless and the police in no way particular, as might be seen in the social scandals which disgraced the night saloons of the Haymarket.

Nowadays the police authorities take more trouble about the preservation of outward decorum, partly because entertainments have been multiplied and popularised in response to the general demand. Critics may deplore the decline of the drama; particular houses may be unlucky and come to grief; but there can be no doubt that the theatre is flourishing with extraordinary success, and that a lucrative field has been opened to the ambition of dramatic authors. There are any number of theatres now in all quarters of West Central London. The run of successful plays must be reckoned by hundreds of nights; the lucky authors or adapters are richly rewarded; the artists who fill the leading parts have lucrative engagements that would have staggered the credulity of their most brilliant predecessors; yet should the manager make a hit, he is sure to be "brought home," since

within the last twenty years he has doubled the prices of the pit-stalls and the boxes. He has no longer to rely on the patronage of our unsophisticated cousins from the country, with a limited circle of confirmed metropolitan playgoers. It is *de rigueur* in all classes of society to profess familiarity with the stage-literature of the day. The inspiration of the interpreters of Shakespeare, or the looks of the stage-queens, are criticised and discussed at every dinner-table. If the head of a household is to lead a happy life, he must take a box from time to time for his family; matrimonial squabbles are squared by the tickets for a couple of stalls; and when Corydon and Phyllis begin to be bored in the honeymoon, the visit to the theatre, with the dinner at the restaurant, is welcomed by both as a blissful relief. The rush of cabs to the eastward down Piccadilly, before the normal London dinner-hour, is perilous and portentous; while the weekly "theatre trains" running through the metropolitan counties are found to remunerate the companies handsomely, although they upset all rural domestic arrangements. And the stage has been flourishing to the south of the river and away in the regions of the east, though it would have done still better had it not been for the competition of the music-halls. The music-hall is the bijou theatre

of the poor. It suits their tastes and anticipates their fancies. And to have really happy holiday-making among the lower orders, they must have the privileges of eating, drinking, and smoking freely.

They may enjoy that to the utmost, assuming them to have the money, in the summer excursions which are now universal. In these days of rival railway companies, with perpetual excursion trains, it is hard to realise the state of mind of the London working man at the accession of her Majesty. Unless he retained some faint recollections of the parish of his boyhood, his vision had been bounded all his life by the London bricks and mortar. He might have strolled under the elms in Hyde Park, or seen the spire of Harrow from the heights of Hampstead; but he knew nothing of shady and flowery field-lanes far away from gas-lamps and watchmen; he had never seen the sea or the Channel; and his knowledge of ornithology was gathered from the sparrows in the streets, or the parrots and canaries in the windows of the bird-shops. When the Child of the Marshalsea cross-examined her friend the Turnkey about the buttercups and the daisies, he had promptly to turn the conversation to hardbake. Many a man, not always "on the lock" of a City prison, was at least as ignorant as the kindly Bob. Now the frequent

summer excursions to the sea have been brought within the reach of everybody who has a trifle in the savings bank or "tick" with the master. We do not know that these brief outings bring unmixed good, as they are certainly far from being unadulterated enjoyment. Any ordinary day's labour would seem less fatiguing than the early start, the scramble for tickets, the hustling for places, the comfortless carriages, the terribly long day on the melancholy shore, with no shelter between the sea and the shingle, and the slow return in the shadows of the night, half-stupefied with bodily fatigue, if not with spirits and tobacco-smoke. The morning must often bring regrets, if not repentance, and that single toilsome holiday necessarily involves sundry others. But at any rate, the sea trips must expand the mind, as they are becoming a condition of the existence of the modern working man.

Personally we should prefer the lot of the skilled artisan with fair and regular wages to that of the ordinary clerk or shopman. But as far as the new holidays are concerned, the latter have decidedly the advantage; and it seems to us that it is the clerks and shopmen who chiefly profit by them. Unless the quarterly Bank holiday falls in the middle of the week, they can generally arrange for several days of liberty.

The scenes at the great metropolitan stations are striking on the first evening, when the City drudges have broken loose from harness. Special succeeds special at the bustling platforms, each of them, of course, being despatched after time, but still with creditable punctuality considering the circumstances. The first-class carriages are few and far between; the luggage-vans are neglected. The passengers are chiefly of the male sex, and for the most part they are young. They are bound for Inverness, for Holyhead *en route* to Ireland, for Penzance, Penrith, or the Isle of Man. The forethought necessary for financing them has been teaching lessons of self-denial, and they have been stinting themselves in more selfish pleasures to pay for their railway tickets. Assuredly they will make a fairer start on their return, humanised and invigorated by the memories they have been reviving. Nor can anything show the hold these holidays have been taking upon the City youth, like the swelling of the traffic in the most inclement seasons on the cheaper Continental routes. The steamers from Harwich or from Queensborough have filled to overflowing of a sudden; for the Dutch and the German clerks are revisiting their fatherlands, risking storms and sea-sickness and scrambling discomfort, in the touch of human nature that makes all the world kin.

CHAPTER XII.

THE COUNTRY FIFTY YEARS AGO.

COUNTRY residents of all classes have gained immensely by the changes of the last half-century. Life in the country was wont to be isolation or stagnation at the best, and many of the remote parishes lay literally out of the world. The Lake poets had huddled themselves together like the sheep in their Cumberland snow-drifts, and they cramped the genius that might have done greater things in voluntary sequestration from the society of their compeers. We see the indefatigable Southey forced to collect a library almost unparalleled for a hard-working writer of very moderate means who supported a family from hand to mouth; and Scott beyond the Border, in the receipt of a magnificent income, grumbled, with great reason, at the enormous cost of postages and packets, although no man had a more influential connection, and though he drew freely on his friends in Parliament for

franks. The ordinary country gentleman was fettered physically and intellectually. He almost lost the habit of letter-writing, and consequently fell out of acquaintance with absent friends, because postal charges were felt to be wasteful extravagance. The trouble as well as the expense of a journey was so serious that he seldom stirred from home. There was no certainty of booking a coach-seat from intermediate stations ; he could only be accommodated if there chanced to be room. Nor had he many inducements to make the effort, since all his interests were local. As for the wealthy yeoman or the well-to-do provincial shopkeeper, he would have been lost in London. Now and then a John Browdie, breaking out in a wedding frolic, took his bride and her bridesmaid on a sight-seeing trip to town. But, though he might talk till his dying day of that memorable enterprise, we suspect he was heartily glad when the "treat" he had stood came to an end. The market boroughs, though frequently more flourishing than they are now, reminded one of rich but mouldy Stiltons, matured by liberal infusions of strong ale, and smacking of ripe age and seclusion. The farmers flocked into the ordinary of a market-day, to discuss the current prices of crops and cattle, and to retail such venerable jests as had shaken the sides of their fathers. The shopkeepers had

their familiar customers in the farmers' wives, with whom they cracked the good old jokes and drove stiff profitable bargains across the counter. Those who grew rich enriched themselves slowly by frugal habits, and they had seldom the fear of insolvency before their eyes, for everything in the shape of speculation was considered scandalous. There would be an occasional cattle-show, a race-meeting, or a hunt-steeplechase, but otherwise there were absolutely no amusements, although pipes and tobacco were in universal demand, and the population contributed liberally to the Excise duties. From the squire and the parson downwards, most people indulged in various strong liquors, according to their cloth and their means. As to what went on in the outer political world, they knew little and they cared less. The ruthless campaigns of Christinos and Carlists were matters of as much indifference to them as the siege of Troy or the fall of Carthage. The events of the day were the arrivals of the coaches: not that the loungers were looking out for letters or papers, but because, at least, they had the satisfaction of staring at strange faces, of hearing chance scraps of road gossip from the guards, and of seeing the coatless helpers swiftly hitching on the fresh and fiery team, while the smoking horses that had come in clattered down the coach-yard to their stables.

Yet, compared to many a country parish, the dead-alive old borough was a centre of joviality and culture. It is difficult to realise the depths of ignorance and of indifference as to national affairs among the natives of the lonely Northern Dales, or even of districts nearer the metropolis. William Howitt has painted the Dalesmen most graphically, locked up in some savage *cul-de-sac* between the brawling stream and the mountains, surrounded certainly by rough material comforts, but limiting their intercourse with the strangers without their gates to an occasional visit from a pedlar or the tax-gatherer. They kept so hard a grip upon their gear, that the tax-gatherer wrung the taxes from them shilling by shilling, although the money was ready in a cupboard up-stairs, and the householder knew it must be paid. With the short days and the long winters in the dark shadows of the hills, they grudged fires and lights as prodigal follies, and went to bed in December soon after the sun. Unless when they celebrated a birth, a marriage, or a death, they rarely indulged in any kind of recreation ; and less eventful existences it is impossible to conceive. But those Dalesmen were, at least, in decent circumstances ; and neighbours knitted together by generations of intermarriages, who would have grudged a penny in charity to the next valley, were ready enough to relieve the destitute among

themselves. Poverty was almost universal in many of the lowland parishes, and light seldom broke into the miserable hovels of the labourers from one year's end to the other. In many cases there was no resident squire, as there was no resident parson. It was the day of pluralities, when even the accumulation of sundry paltry livings scarcely supplied the means of providing a joint-stock curate, wretchedly as curates were paid. The rector or vicar, if he lived within reach, was content to pay an occasional Sunday visit and to scramble through a single service. If he knew his parishioners by sight, he felt that the less he conversed with them the better, otherwise his temper would have been fretted by incessant appeals, and his purse would have been perpetually drained. If he devolved his duties on a subordinate, his conscience was so far liberated. But what could a Reverend Amos Barton do for his starving flock, with his scanty stipend and his hungry family? He could offer them his ministrations, which were something, and possibly his sympathy, which might be more; but, after all, a pauperised parish looks for bread and beer, for clothes and medicines, as well as for spiritual assistance. The labourers in many of the great agricultural parishes were ground down by grasping farmers, who very likely were rack-rented themselves, and who could make their own

terms with their field-hands. The average Dorsetshire wages of 5s. a-week were common enough in other counties. The poor were hustled along from the cradle to the coffin; their children seldom went to school, and it was just as well, since they had no leisure in after-life to turn even elementary education to profit; they toiled while they could for a bare subsistence; they were racked with aches and rheumatism before their time; they might think themselves lucky, when they fell sick, if they had a call from the parish doctor, who probably lived as far away as the clergyman; and when Death brought relief from prolonged privation, whether he found them at home or in a ward of the poor-house, they had a parochial funeral, grudgingly given by contract, at the cost of the struggling ratepayers. From first to last they had been fighting forward in dogged despair, without one gleam of rational hope. As for amusement, they had never heard of it, and knew nothing of the meaning of the word. It is hard to figure how brutish a naturally respectable man may become, when he feels himself to be utterly forgotten and neglected.

Yet it is fair to remember that the "Merry England" of our ancestors was never altogether a myth. Dickens, in a remarkable article in 'Household Words,' found it impossible to fix any epoch in our history to which the epithet

could have been honestly applied. And it is true that if feudal tyranny and civil troubles are things of the past, disease, poverty, and certain social grievances must be always with us; nevertheless there were many favoured parishes in England where the poor were made as happy as could be reasonably expected. There was many a jolly Bracebridge Hall, many a bluff and kindly Squire Hazeldean, and many a worthy Parson Dale. Fifty years ago many a wealthy landlord lived all the year on his hereditary acres, letting his farms on easy terms to respectable tenants, on the understanding that they should deal liberally in turn with their dependants. The good old customs were fondly perpetuated, while new and beneficent practices had been introduced. There was the annual crowning with the primrose-wreaths of the rosy-checked Queen of the May, and the dances round the Maypole on the village green. There was hospitality for all comers in the Hall at Christmastide, with many another excuse for merry gatherings when the christening, or the coming of age of the heir, or the marriages of his sisters, were to be celebrated. Scott sings that

“A Christmas gambol oft would cheer
The poor man’s heart through half the year.”

There the poet of the romantic past may possibly

indulge poetic licence ; but the poor man who lived under the protection of the Hall and the Rectory did not depend for six months' encouragement on a single revel. He knew he had friends within reach who were ever willing to help him. Baskets were brought from the great house in time of sickness, and the cottage was cheered by the Lady Bountiful herself, or by the bright and sympathising faces of her daughters. In the absence of the squire the rector was on the spot, and the rector was ready at all times with spiritual consolations. The cottage itself might be a model of cleanliness and coquettish comfort, with its lozenged windows, framed in flowering creepers, its beehives, and the gay flower-beds before the door. Those lucky labourers had little reason to complain, and they hoped that their children might be still better off. For the children nowadays were sent regularly to a good village school, and delighted their admiring parents by the prizes they brought home and their wonderful forwardness in "book-learning." And the well-grown though loose-jointed hobbledehoys who were already "fending for themselves" were kept away from the temptations of the beer-house of a summer evening. The squire was the paying patron of the village cricket-club, and the players and spectators, setting wet weather at defiance, met every evening

on the green. Their energy was stimulated by challenges from neighbouring associations, and these contests were as keenly looked forward to and as eagerly contested as the more scientific matches at Lord's. There was one great advantage in this friendly overlooking of the poor, inasmuch as it bound them, from motives of self-interest, to straight courses and steady behaviour. Of course there will be black sheep in every flock, and there are graceless lads who will go to the mischief notwithstanding all persuasion to the contrary. But in those well-regulated rural parishes the lines of demarcation between the sheep and the goats were so sharply drawn that it was impossible to slip over them unconsciously. The tone of good village society was as arbitrary as in the strictest circles of fashionable London; while, as everybody lived under the public eye, a constant supervision was exercised on its members. Nevertheless, opinion was not too hard upon human nature, and certain distractions were not only tolerated, but considered commendable. Station had its privileges as well as its duties. The bright little inn, with its tiled roofs and its quaint gables, was a venerated institution, and the resort of all the local respectability. The squire's arms were emblazoned on the swinging sign, and the house was kept by an old family servant. He was

hand-in-glove with all the notables, and could do them a good turn on occasion. The farmers came to smoke their pipes of an evening in the parlour; the bailiff, the veterinary surgeon, the general shopkeeper, who was people's churchwarden as well, were regular attendants; even the doctor condescended to drop in now and again. George Eliot has given an inimitable description of one of these meetings in her 'Silas Marner.' We could fancy the novelist had been "among them taking notes," hidden under the heavy oaken table. The customers or the landlord knew well how much liquor each man could carry comfortably, and excess was seldom permitted. The decent labourers repaired to a room of their own, unless they preferred to be served standing at the bar. When a man betook himself to ways of wickedness, or when an idle lad had kicked over the traces, he resorted to the pot-house. Pot-houses were put down in certain parishes, where a single landlord owned everything, and made his imperious will beneficently felt. As a rule, however, they were suffered as inevitable nuisances by the easy good-nature of the justices, and partly perhaps as convenient rat-traps where the rural constable could collar his game. Any one interfering with them would have made himself extremely unpopular. They were to some extent supported

by labourers of fair character, who loved the tap of thick and loaded ale on which they could stupefy themselves cheaply. But it was in them that all the disreputables of the neighbourhood had their meetings, where they knocked up nocturnal parties for snaring the ground game, for netting the partridges, or raiding upon the pheasant coverts. The host was, in fact, a "fence" and receiver; he bought the stolen game at his own price, and sent it away in his blackguardly spring-cart to be sold at a handsome profit. He induced his thirsty clients to pilfer their masters, and set off against the long scores chalked up behind his door their trusses of hay and their bushels of corn. And all his sneaking accomplices were remorselessly bullied by their tyrant, for the terrors of exposure and conviction were kept continually before them. Romantic fancies of rural felicity, even under the most favourable conditions, would have been rudely dissipated by a glimpse behind the scenes at the "Cat and Shovel" at the cross-roads.

CHAPTER XIII.

COUNTRY CHANGES.

ON the whole, notwithstanding the decline in rents and depression in agriculture, the condition of the country has changed for the better. The landlords have been impoverished; the old tenants have too often been coming to grief, but it is in great degree due to the fact of a more general diffusion of comfort. Labourers have been drifting into the cities; consequently those who remain get higher wages, although they may be less regularly employed. It is certain that they are better housed and clothed, and that their habits of living are almost luxurious, compared to those of their grandfathers. They cannot say that they are forgotten or neglected, now that it is impossible to hush up parochial scandals. Generous philanthropical gentlemen, in love with notoriety, are always ready to expose the poor man's grievances in the papers, and to call attention to

“crying abuses.” More significant still, as a sign of the times and of rapid rustic progression, is the formidable combinations they have been forming under such leaders as Mr Joseph Arch, who studied political economy behind a Warwickshire plough, to enforce their claims, real or imaginary. The schoolmaster has been abroad among them : they have hopes and aspirations ; and although in some respects those associations are to be regretted, which mean a blending of “ blindman’s - buff ” with “ follow my leader,” yet they indicate an awakening of sluggish intelligences, and have sometimes been powerful for good. Now the poor-law system has been improved, if it still falls short of perfection ; and it is impossible that any family should starve. Now there are parish doctors paid to give regular attendance, and if those hard-worked officials should fail in their duty, there are obvious means of bringing them to book ; for at present few parishes are absolutely neglected. Now that pluralities of livings have been done away with, there must be a resident clergyman of some kind. Even a careless incumbent must in some measure be kept up to the mark by the steady pressure of local opinion. The Church, whatever its unkindly critics may say, has developed wonderful activity in the last fifty years. Curates are become comparatively common, and,

comparatively speaking, they are liberally paid. Not a man of them now but would turn up his nose at the double of the £40 a-year on which Goldsmith's immortal incumbent considered himself passing rich. And to do them bare justice, they usually work well for their money. Charlotte Brontë's trio of Yorkshire curates in 'Shirley' were, no doubt, admirably realistic portraits of types that had been familiar to the brilliant artist. Nowadays we should rightly set them down as fancifully coloured caricatures. The contemporary curate, when he plays at pomps and ceremonies in Little Peddlington, may show some of the spiritual pride of a Pope Hildebrand, but his foibles and even his follies are in keeping with his cloth. He may flirt with the world and the fair sex at lawn-tennis and five-o'clock teas, but, in the country at least, he does his best to keep the flesh in subjection by a severe routine of services, often scantily attended, supplemented by strenuous parochial exertions. Fancy conjures him up in flexible felt hat and solemn black,—surely the least suitable of all clothing for his purposes,—holding his own in the teeth of wind and weather, and plunging through muddy lanes and slippery field paths, while knocking off a prearranged round of engagements. He has his foibles, and is apt to indulge in a juvenile sense of his spiritual

dignity, which he will probably grow out of as years go on. But though his head be metaphorically in the air, his heart is in his work; he is indefatigable in attentions to the sick and the sorrowful, and if he has not the command of words of comfort in season, at all events his parishioners come to see that he means exceedingly well. The dullest of the poor in their cravings for sympathy, are strangely quick to read the signs of its presence; and it would be hard to overrate the value of the Church as an agency for strengthening the ties of kindly feeling and common interests which should unite the classes of country society.

As for ideal parishes like the Hazeldean of 'My Novel,' it is to be feared that now they are few and far between. The tinker would no longer find customers for his incendiary tracts, because such vagabonds are undersold by the cheap democratic news-sheets and the peripatetic agents of fifth-class and freethinking publishing firms. Moreover, squires like Mr Hazeldean, with moderately sized estates, have been betaking themselves to London for the gaieties of the season, and their mortgages have been growing as their rents have been going down. What with the interest on encumbrances, with the overdrawn balances at their banker's, with the long bills and high charges of fashionable tradesmen, they

must look to shillings at home, where formerly they thought little of sovereigns. The Hall seldom keeps up the good old-fashioned custom of open kitchen and buttery-hatch ; and though the household still feels an interest in its dependants and poor neighbours, protracted absences, and a greater variety of dissipations and distractions, have been loosening the old hereditary connection. But, on the other hand, a number of wealthy new men have been pouring capital into the country districts. All round the great manufacturing and industrial centres, where factory smoke or chemical fumes make existence intolerable, the rural parishes have been colonised by men who must live within railway-reach of their business. They have bought out the old proprietors ; they have built themselves Gothic castles and sumptuous Italian palaces ; they have reclaimed moorland ; they have drained swamp ; they have turned wastes into woodland ; not unfrequently, we fear, they have enclosed commons ; they have laid themselves out magnificent hanging-gardens, with such glass-houses as were never among the glories of Babylon, where indeed the climate did not call for conservatories ; and then, as it is not in their energetic natures to cross their hands even when they have sought rest and retirement, they have been riding many other

expensive but useful hobbies. They have built model homesteads, beautifully ventilated and drained, with all the improvements agricultural science can suggest; they have bought themselves priceless herds of pedigree shorthorns; and collected breeds of sheep in their folds, famous for the flesh or the fleece. Scores of men are employed at good wages in the gardens and shrubberies with their miles of gravel walk. Many more are engaged in looking after the game in the fields, and the hand-fed pheasants in the well-stocked coverts. In short, their public and private works, with a lavish expenditure of capital, have diffused prosperity on every side. Wilds once as dreary as Chatmoss, are waving to-day with golden grain, sheltered by flourishing plantations, and dotted with smiling hamlets. Salubrious cottages more or less ornamental have been solidly built, church-building by private individuals has become comparatively common, and you hear the chimes in the new steeple from the depths of northern dales that used to be a dozen miles from the ministration of the nearest parson. The rosy, well-fed children, who would have been running wild like the colts on the hillsides, trip daily across the brooks on their way to the school, over the graceful rustic bridge that has replaced the slippery stepping-stones. In fact, most of the money

made in English trade comes to be invested sooner or later in the English country; and we may be sure that so it will continue to be, even should English wheat-growing be finally smothered under the discharges of grain from the American elevators.

Nor can we forget an important class of hereditary landowners, who are placed practically above the vicissitudes of agriculture. It will be found that the wealthiest peers draw the bulk of their incomes from coal or minerals, or from city property. His Grace of Northumberland, the largest of English landowners, is the exception; but it will be remembered that the Duke sold Northumberland House, with the lion, the gardens, and the ground about them, for an enormous sum of money. To name, on the spur of the moment, only a few of the proprietors in London, there are the Dukes of Westminster and Bedford, the Marquis of Salisbury, the Earl of Cadogan, and Lord Portman. The Duke of Norfolk is lord of the overbuilt manors in the cutlery capital; the Earls of Derby and Bradford are enriched by the ground-rents and minerals of Lancashire; Lords Londonderry, Durham, and Fitzwilliam are great coalowners in the north; the coal-fields of the midlands, and the lead and copper of Devon and Cornwall, pay profitable royalties to peers, from the Duke of Cornwall

downwards. Most of our fashionable watering-places, from breezy Scarborough to balmy Torquay, yield fabulous returns to their fortunate superiors. There are nobles like the Duke of Devonshire who draw their magnificent revenues from both those sources. His Grace is a sleeping partner in the busy industries of Barrow-in-Furness, and the deeply interested promoter of the building at Eastbourne, which has been stretching its crescents and terraces towards Beachy Head. The nominal incomes of many of these gentlemen are immense; but practically and to no trifling extent, they hold their property in trust for the public. They are burdened with moral encumbrances, which in most cases are as punctually met as the rates and taxes. Setting better motives aside, *noblesse oblige*, and they must head national and local subscriptions with handsome contributions. They would consider it a personal reproach if there were visible signs of social wretchedness in the neighbourhood of any of their numerous country-seats. They would as soon appear in the Park in June in a battered hat and a frock-coat out at elbows.

It is becoming the practice to abuse our "old nobility," but after all, they fill as useful a place in our social system as the capitalists, who are exacting employers of labour. They give much and they expect comparatively little. Their

labourers take things easily on the home farms, on which the noble farmers invariably lose money. There are troops of under-gardeners pottering about among the vegetable beds and the flower-borders. There are excessive staffs of keepers and under-keepers, of foresters and under-foresters. There are rheumatic ditchers and half-superannuated hedgers, who dally over the day's work; and there are estate workmen—carpenters, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, &c.—who have their permanent staffs, and take things almost as easily. I am far from saying that slovenly labour is a good thing; and in these days of feverish international competition, the national industries must be driven at high pressure if we are to hold our own. All the same, one likes to think that there are oases in our country where the working classes may take life tolerably leisurely. Approaching what the Scotch call “the home policies” of some noble, ancestral domain, the change from parishes less fortunately situated is striking. Money has been spent freely from time immemorial. Heaven only knows how much capital has been sunk in the solid oaken pales of the deer-park. The moss-grown piles may possibly have been driven about the time the dockyards laid the keel of the *Victory* with timber from Houghton Hall. There has been no frugal cutting or cheese-paring in the

copses or luxurious hedgerows. The turf skirting the roads, shaded with the impenetrable foliage of oak and elm, would feed the cattle of whole caravans of tramps ; and the ways themselves are kept as free from weeds and ruts as the gravelled drives within the enclosures. The lodges, tenanted by old servants, or gamekeepers, or woodmen, are so many luxurious villas in miniature ; though they are scarcely more comfortable or more coquettish than the cottages of the little village, with their flowers, their fruit-trees, and their beehives. The people employed may not appreciate the poetry of their lot, but they may enjoy peace of mind, which is better. They know that if they conduct themselves decently, they need have no fear of the work-house. They will find light employment while they are anyways fit for it ; and when their strength fails, they will be supported among their relatives, with help from "the House" ; or they will get admission to the snug village alms-cottages, where they will not be separated from their wives. Some people will call that an over-coloured picture ; as matter of fact it is simply photographed from observations on scores of estates.

As for the market-boroughs and small provincial towns, they have experienced various vicissitudes. Some have been going up in the

world, others have been going down ; but most have been awakening intellectually and bestirring themselves. There are venerable seaports that have seen their commerce slipping away, since cargoes have been carried cheaply by the great steam-companies. Their harbours have been slowly silting up ; the deserted *quais* with the rusted mooring-rings are sadly dilapidated. The old brick mansions built by prosperous merchants, with their nail-clenched oaken doors and their sculptured lintels, hang on the hands of the house-agents when they are offered for sale. The old spinsters and the single gentlemen of good county families, who enjoyed cheap consideration in the county town where they were known and respected, have been gradually dying out. Those who represent them now seek for lodgings in London or in the neighbouring watering-place.

The agricultural boroughs have been suffering, of course : in some of these in the eastern counties, where large farms are on the landlords' hands or thrown out of cultivation, the farmers' wives used once to do their shopping in their carriages, driven by smart coachmen in livery. Now, on a market-day, nothing breaks the silence of the narrow streets except the rattle of an occasional spring-cart. There were towns on those great highroads of traffic that had suc-

ceeded the military "streets" of the Romans, which were kept constantly alive by the ceaseless bustle of coaching and posting. There was a perpetual sounding of horns and cracking of whips. Twenty or thirty coaches, light and heavy, would be changing horses in the twenty-four hours. Post-chaises, travelling chariots, and ponderous carriages with dickeys and rumbles, were always pulling up between dusk and dawn at the doors of the far-renowned posting-inns. Any number of private sitting-rooms were named or numbered; there were head-waiters and chambermaids always on duty, to welcome the shoals of guests; the sideboards in the coffee-room groaned under the cold joints, where you might cut and come again; while postilions slept in their clothes in lofts above the stables, ready to turn out at the summons of "first pairs down the yard." The postilions were terribly hard-worked, but they put into a pleasant lottery. They might do the distance to the next stage on the regular tariff of tips; but they might be roused by travellers boiling over with excitement, who would pay anything in reason or out of reason for pace. There might be a runaway couple bound for the Border, with a furious parent in fierce pursuit. There might be a bankrupt speculator bolting from his creditors to catch the packet for New York; or a

mourner might be hurrying in hot haste to a deathbed, when each minute of delay might mean undying regret. Borrow, in his 'Lavengro,' has graphically sketched one of those prosperous inns, with the life, the bustle, and the liberal profusion animating and pervading all its departments. The inns were the best customers of the butcher, the baker, and the grocer. The farmers in the neighbourhood supplied the stables with horses, they filled the hay-lofts and the straw-yard, and poured golden grain in exchange for golden guineas into the bursting corn-chests. They disposed of their poultry, eggs, and dairy produce, to customers who never haggled over halfpence. Now those superannuated inns, if they still survive, remind one of Hood's "haunted house"; merry places in the days of yore, they are become the very abomination of dreary desolation. As for the coaching-yard, it is let cheap to the brewer round the corner, who fills the cob-webbed stalls and carriage-sheds with his empty casks. The butcher, the baker, and the grocer, with the farmers, have fallen upon lean and evil days. The rates have been rising as the population has been dwindling, and the respectable ratepayers, in what should be a cheery little place, are groaning under the intolerable weight of their burdens. On the other hand, there are boroughs which have held their own, or have

had unlooked-for turns of luck. Some of them in the shires, like Melton or Market-Harborough, thrive by the hunting which is as fashionable as ever, and which is become far more popular, as farmers find to their cost when they groan over trampled wheat and broken fences. But the most fortunate are those which have taken the fancy of the tourists, either for picturesque situation or from the celebrity of places in the neighbourhood. The season may be brief, but it is busy and lucrative. Hotels, inns, and lodging-houses are multiplied; foreign speech may not infrequently be heard in the streets; and there are places of cosmopolitan pilgrimage, where Americans in particular swarm. Four-in-hand coaches and omnibuses carry the cheap-trippers on the favourite excursions, each idle loungeur is ready to turn guide, and the very schoolboys are always on the watch to relieve visitors of handbags and luncheon-baskets.

Whether those out-of-the-way boroughs have been enriched or impoverished, their inhabitants begin to waken up. Their intelligence has been developed with their bodily powers. Cheap papers and publications have disseminated knowledge. The local politician need no longer content himself with the news of last week, as they were condensed in the columns of the county journal. Political clubs and debating societies

are encouraged and subsidised by the local wirepullers of contending parties. The town hall pays its way by the help of all manner of entertainments, from "penny readings" to concerts and temperance congresses. There are lectures on every conceivable subject, addressed to listeners who must sometimes be sadly bored, but who at least show a gratifying thirst for information; and as middle-aged burghers have been deserting the public-house parlours, so the rising generation has other resources than listless idleness or dissipation. Any lad who means to be thought worth his salt must go in for some sort of manly sport. Cricket clubs are more common than they used to be: there is generally a good ground kept in capital order; there is seldom any lack of funds; and enthusiasm is stimulated by challenges and matches. The more boisterous football has been becoming the rage, more especially in the manufacturing midlands and in the northern counties. The play may be sometimes of the "rough and tumble" kind; at all events, it is less injurious to life than soaking spirits and beer and smoking coarse tobacco. Then the new fashion of cycling has been of immense advantage to young shopmen and youths of the lower-middle class, who used to be sadly puzzled as to putting a holiday to a proper use, and never knew how to kill the

long summer evenings. They have horses of metal that do not stand at livery and never eat their heads off ; and as they are whirled into the country through the shady lanes, as they bring mind and muscles into condition, the fresh air blows away the cobwebs of business. There is much to be said for a quiet life in the country, though it offers few temptations to avarice or ambition. It is the dream of the busy city man to retire to it with a competence or a fortune ; and if he does realise that dream, he is pretty sure to be disappointed. He misses the shafts and the collar that used to gall him ; he finds the unfamiliar indolence the reverse of enjoyable. Whereas the country-bred man of business begins where he hopes to end : unless he be a land agent or a solicitor in extensive practice, he has taken life more or less leisurely, whether he would or not ; and he has always mixed a fair share of recreation with his avocations. He ought to have kept his health ; he has made much of this present world ; nor does he care to change the easy habits of a lifetime until he is actually superannuated and in second childhood.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE OLD AND THE NEW FARMERS.

THE farmers of the old school are fast disappearing, and the Poysers of the Hall Farms will soon be as scarce as the bustard or the bittern. They have not only suffered from hard times, but they have succumbed to the exigencies of modern improvements. Not only have they to face the competition of cattle shipped from the American ranches, and of wheat grown on the reclaimed bison-grounds of the Far West, on the boundless plains of Russia, and on the banks of the broad Indian rivers ; but nowadays, if a big farm can be made to pay at all, wellnigh everything must be done by machinery. We cannot, and perhaps we would not, recall the past, but we may be pardoned if we look back to it regretfully. Not only are the new changes deplorable from the picturesque point of view, but they have been anything but clear gain to the country-folk. In spite of the

applications of science in the shape of steam-power and artificial manures; notwithstanding the modern system of credit which draws bills on the local bank against growing crops and beasts that are being stall-fed,—the farmers are having a desperately hard fight of it, and if their fields were being drained like their capital, they would be better off than they are. With their steam-ploughs and their patent implements of all kinds, they may still employ as much labour as before, and at certain seasons of the year may give higher wages; but the demand for hands comes in rushes and at doubtful intervals. Frugal guardians of the farmers' interests have been keeping down rates by discouraging the erection of cottages for labourers who may come sooner or later on the parish. The consequence is that labour is unsettled; that the employer has lost touch with his working folks, who are now always on the outlook for new engagements; and that the field hands have been crowding into the manufacturing towns, lowering the mechanics' wages, and increasing the chronic poverty by an influx of unskilled but stalwart competitors.

To the modern farmer with a middle-sized holding, hesitating between emigration and the gloomy prospect of the workhouse, the pictures of the days of fifty years ago must seem like a

dream of Eden. There had been ups and downs, no doubt, after the inflated prices of the long European war ; but on the whole, and taking one year with another, the farmers comfortably held their own. Their eternal grumbling was a real luxury, because they generally knew there was small reason for it. The farms might be high-rented ; but landlords of the good old stamp knew that little was to be gained by parting with honest and industrious tenants ; they either gave time or timely reductions. The model tenant, like Mr Poyser, was solvent and safe ; he was economical and hard-working, although not enterprising. The landlord sympathised with his aversion to enterprise, and both heartily detested all newfangled inventions. On such an occasion as the memorable visit of Mr Donithorne, when he was driven to beat an ignominious retreat before the cackling geese and the grinning "wenches," Mr Poyser would come in stripped of coat and neckcloth, in the reassuring sweat of severe bodily exertions. Only fancy the expression of Mrs Poyser's face had the agent of some firm in Liverpool or Chester proposed to sell her a cottage piano, on the assumption that any one under her roof was capable of performing on the instrument. The music she loved was the clatter of the milk-cans. No oil-cake had been carted into Mr Poyser's

yard; with the exception of a possible sprinkling of bone-dust, no manures were scattered over his fields but what came from 'the stables or the well-filled cow-sheds; and in place of the spasmodic activity of the steam threshing-machine, half-a-dozen of flails were plied indefatigably in the great barn through the darkened days of the wearisome winter. Yet to the unscientific eye the Hall Farm was a picture of plenty, prosperity, and beauty. The straight furrows were thrown up, though perhaps somewhat superficially, by teams of sturdy horses that never turned a hair. The stolid carters, heavy ballasted with their breakfasts of cold beans and bacon, of porridge and hunches of home-made bread, took a kindly, brotherly pride in the animals they tended. The sleek cows for the dairy, though they might not have been crossed from famous strains or descended from pedigrees commemorated in the "Herd Book," were a sight to see as they lazily switched their tails beneath the apple-trees in the orchard or under the alders by the murmuring brook in the cool shadows of the home paddocks. The worthy farmer had almost as few cares. He had learned to live in the day, to set off the rough against the smooth, and to comfort himself in the most exasperating of seasons with a sanguine faith in averages. He ran no long bills; he paid for all

purchases at the fairs with ready money, carrying the bank-notes in his greasy pocket-book and the guineas in a canvas bag. The old farmer's habits were simplicity itself. Unless he were in a very large way of business indeed, he contented himself with the same simple fare as his labourers; and would smoke his pipe in the midst of them in the kitchen when they had supped together, chatting over the work of the day and the morrow. He was given to hospitality, but guests were rare; for his neighbours, after a long day's labour, loved the snug repose of their own chimney-corners. Now and again, however, between seed-time and harvest, he would break out in a grand festivity. William Howitt has described one of those annual festivals; and though Howitt's descriptions are usually true to the life, we can hardly help suspecting him for once of over-colouring. He paints Gargantuan appetites and the rustic profusion of a Camacho's feast, with a blissful round of banqueting and revelry, between the solid "snack" before the one o'clock dinner and the substantial supper that cheered the evening dance. The low-roofed rooms, swept and garnished for the great occasion, were redolent of savoury odours from turkeys, geese, and fowls, from hams and tongues and rich pigeon-pies, not to speak of more solid *pièces de résistance* in the

shape of saddles and sirloins. There were "kickshaws" in the way of sweets, in equal abundance, from plum-puddings and pastry to cakes and whipped creams. At those prodigal merry-makings there was even wine for those who liked it; but the favourite tipple was the heady nut-brown home-brewed, corrected by stronger spirits and water. Nor was the entertainment very costly, when nine-tenths of the food and drink was supplied from the farmyard, the dairy, and the brew-house. Peaceful digestion waited on insatiable appetite; and host and guests went about their work betimes the next morning, as if they had signed a solemn covenant of total abstinence and been practising the moderation of tramps in the casual ward.

The sons of those hearty old farmers had been brought up in the paternal habits, and hoped to plod forward, peaceably paying their way, in the smooth old-fashioned grooves. In that they were disappointed. The son and successor of stout old Hodge found himself face to face with a changing state of things. The first sinister warnings came in the shape of quotations from great centres of business disturbing the steady local rates. The causes of those mysterious and startling fluctuations began slowly to dawn on his intelligence as they were quickly brought home to his pockets. Steamships, at first from New York and Odessa,

then afterwards from Alexandria and Bombay, were discharging their cheap cargoes of grain in the docks of London and Liverpool. The railways were forcing him forward in spite of himself, as they were offering him new and unfamiliar facilities of which he was naturally slow to take advantage. The farmers of the old school had come into competition with the spirited and progressive agriculturist of the new style. Rents had been showing a tendency to fall with the cheapening importations of foreign corn and cattle. But the old tenants rarely reaped the benefits of the decline. Landlords with encumbrances or accustomed to expensive habits cast about for new tenants for their lands, and these were ready enough to offer themselves while times were still fairly prosperous, and when money was almost going begging in the markets. The reason of the multiplication of showy provincial branch banks was the new agricultural interest that looked to them for perpetual advances. Say that ten pounds per acre is a reasonable capital for making farming remunerative. If the new man found half the money, he could readily borrow the other half. Knowing that he was lending on a tolerably safe margin, the courteous manager was always willing to accommodate. The bills were taken up or renewed as they fell due, but the borrower, who

paid the 6 per cent, was bound to turn the money over somehow. Moreover, when bidding high for the farm, he had stipulated with the landlord for advances for permanent improvements, at 5 or 6 per cent. The sheds that had sufficed for the old herds of cattle were to be rebuilt; he went in for thorough draining and deep ploughing. Guano was introduced in 1841, and subsequently a succession of costly artificial manures were advertised as indispensable to intelligent farming. Those manures and the patent cattle foods became the rage, and the hobbies which came to grief under many an eager rider. Then there were marked but expensive improvements in the strains of cattle and sheep; neither flesh nor wool fetched its fair price unless you could give certificates to the stocks from whence they came. The very vegetation in the fields came to be treated on scientific principles—and seedsmen sprang into celebrity in the market towns who did a flourishing business in newfangled roots and in fancy grass-seeds; although it is but fair to say that these last investments were perhaps the most satisfactory of all—for it will be owing to our superior grasses if we can still hold our own against the more coarsely nourished beasts from the American and Australian grazings. I have remarked already on the universal applica-

tion of machine-power, meaning much expenditure of money, whether it be bought or merely hired. But, in fact, it is machinery replacing manual labour that makes the chief difference between the old school and the new. The old farmer trusted to time, and left time to jog along at his own pace. To the new farmer time means money, and he is always trying to force the running. The old farmer left his beasts to fatten slowly on their natural food; the new farmer provokes their appetites with stimulants, and packs the flesh upon their ribs under artificial pressure. The old farmer, with a limited number of regular labourers, got in the hay and the wheat crops as he could; the new farmer pays fancy rates for short engagements, backs up his engines with a host of temporary hands, and so wins his crops in higher condition, and hedges against the uncertainties of the climate. There is good and bad in both systems; but the new system is the more speculative, and in its outgoings by far the most costly. So when unfavourable seasons succeed each other, and prices fall, and bankers, growing uneasy, begin to contract their advances, the new system of credit-farming is shaken to its base, and there are panics in the fields as there are convulsions on the Stock Exchanges. The piano, the smart dogcart, and the pretty little pony-carriage are

brought to the hammer on a bill of sale ; the farmer, thoroughly cleaned out, goes through the ordeal of insolvency, and the landlord is left with the acres on his hands that have been impoverished after being artificially pampered.

Unhappily, the short but eventful career of the scientific and unsuccessful speculator leaves its traces on the picturesque aspects of the county. Fences have been straightened, shady hedgerows have been grubbed, the spreading hedge-timber has been ruthlessly felled, the leafy copses that used to shelter the song-birds have been levelled, till, between the embarrassments of the landlord and the "improvements" of the tenant, what were once the sweetest and most sylvan districts of rural England have come to resemble the vast corn-factories beyond the Atlantic, with their fenceless expanses of arable land and their flimsy habitations of shingle.

CHAPTER XV.

THE OLD AND THE NEW LABOURERS.

THE lot of the tillers of the soil has never been altogether an enviable one. Fresh air they have, and often a superabundance of it, but they have to set off the health of youth against many hardships. The serfs of the Saxon wore collars with their master's name, and were kennelled far less comfortably than the hounds who slept on the skins in the homestead. Later they followed their Anglo-Norman lords to the field, and going on foot, and unburdened with impenetrable mail, had more than their fair share of hard knocks. In civil troubles their miserable hovels were burned as a matter of course, and they were freely hung, drawn, and quartered. When farming became a safe and more lucrative occupation, under the modern conditions of a money-rent or fixed leases, the drivers of ploughs and drawers of water found themselves comparatively well off. Emancipated from virtual serfdom, they

could change their employers at will. There was a novel sense of dignity in being in some degree their own masters; and if the wage was small, the food was plentiful. The labourer was still the stalwart yeoman who had borne the brown bill at Bannockburn or Agincourt, though the deadly axe that had turned the tide of battles was now cutting the copsewood or "plashing" the hedgerows. What with the fresh air, the bacon, the home-brewed and the home-baked on the one hand, the rough work and the exposure to all weathers on the other, it had become a case, throughout untold generations, of the suppression of the sickly and the survival of the fittest. The robust field-hand did the ploughing and the hedging and ditching, till the "rheumatics" tucked him up in the natural course of things. He looked for nothing else, and submitted patiently to the inevitable. Meantime he had married a wife, and the pair increased and multiplied. Between hard labour and healthful sleep they seldom took much thought for the morrow, which is the veritable secret of happiness. As for the poetical side to those scenes of rural felicity, though it strongly recommends itself to amateurs of the picturesque, we fear the rustics were sadly unconscious of its charms. Nothing can be more enchanting to the artist's eye than the venerable English hamlet or the

medieval English cottage. Contrast them with the loathsome dens in the slums and side-alleys of our overcrowded manufacturing towns, where the well-paid artisan must pig with his family, in foul and pestilential air, between the gutters and the garrets. Perhaps among English cottages we might give the palm to those of Hampshire—some of them are said to have been there since the days of the Plantagenets—with their bulging roofs of sedgy thatch, and their walls and windows embowered in roses; though Hampshire is run hard by the cottages of South Warwickshire, so familiar to the pilgrim to the scenery of Shakespeare, or by the cottages nestling in the wooded dells of bleak West Cornwall, where the gales from the Atlantic whistle harmlessly overhead, scarcely stirring the leaves of the luxuriant hydrangea-bushes. But tempting as these old-fashioned cottages look, we suspect the occupant in many cases could tell us more about them. They leave much to desire in wintry or watery weather. The winds find their way round the shrunken door that opens directly on the only “living-room.” The rain will drive through cracks in the lozenged window-panes, charming as they seem in summer in the framework of clematis. The air-currents set down the primitive chimney, and there will be perpetual drip-pings through that picturesque roof of thatch, pos-

sibly honeycombed by the mice and the sparrows. Colds and more serious complaints are not to be lightly shaken off when they seize upon feeble or elderly inmates. And when work is slack or when the father is fond of the beerhouse, the family will be suffering, for all their romantic surroundings, between a scanty stock of fuel and an empty cupboard. The life of the labourer must be hard at the best, with that eternal struggle to make the two ends meet. One often marvels how a steady man, with the closest economy, can manage to struggle along. Considering the slight influence his small savings can have on his future, he has little encouragement to lay by. A glass of beer in hand brings better comfort than the thought of a sovereign to fall back upon in the distant future. Then the labourer is compelled to speculate in spite of himself; and he puts into a lottery where there are many probable losses. There is the chance of illness, which will cast him temporarily on parish charity, or on his club if he be prudent enough to subscribe to a club. And in the winter-time there is sure to be snow and frost to throw him out of employment, although the family should be somehow fed all the same. If he throws his thoughts forward to the decay of his strength, his prospect is a refuge in the poorhouse, where he will exchange the freedom

of his cottage for penitentiary rules, and pay the penalties of involuntary poverty in separation from the wife of his youth. Nowadays, in nine cases out of ten, the labourer must help himself, having nobody else to look to; so it is just as well for his peace of mind that he has never nursed anxieties with habits of reflection.

“Nowadays” I say, because some fifty years ago the labourer was at once more dependent and more independent. He was more independent, because when farms were smaller, and when all the work was done by manual labour, any able-bodied and respectable man might be sure of a permanent engagement. He was more dependent, but then the dependence was a good thing. The unmarried labourer used to be a member of his master’s household. He slept under the farm roof, he took his meals with the master and mistress in the kitchen, and if the master “gave him a lick with the rough side of the tongue,” he minded it as little as the bite of a passing March blast. He had intelligence enough to understand that he was reasonably well off; he knew that he might go farther and fare much worse. Churlish cupboard-parsimony was not the besetting sin of the old-fashioned farmer; he was chary of his coin, but free with his “victual.” He bargained to give his men a trifling money-fee, but he fed them as he lived

himself. They had their occasional recreation in the shape of Christmas suppers and harvest feasts—of excursions with the waggon to the neighbouring market-town—of attendance at the “statutes” and fairs, which was duly stipulated in their agreements. If the labourer married, of course he changed materially for the worse. Poverty must clash with wedded felicity, if they are not absolutely incompatible. But in those days it was comparatively easy to find a cottage on his employer’s land, or in some hamlet within easy reach of his work. Skim-milk was at the service of the swine or the cottagers’ families, and the old favourite got help in many shapes from the orchard, garden, and pigsty. The married man needed all the help he could get, for his wages were miserably low. They might be from five to six shillings in the south-west, and if they were nearly twice as high in the northern counties, the work was harder in proportion. But a fruitful wife and a swarm of children were by no means unmixed misfortunes, when the majority of the children were boys. There was no worrying School Act in those quiet-going times to deprive the parents of their children’s services. It was astonishing how early the little lads ceased to eat the bread of idleness. The smallest of them would be sent to gather mushrooms and blackberries. They

were soon fitted out with a dinner-satchel and a pair of clappers, and sent to scare the birds from the newly sown fields. Thence they went on to the ordinary farm-work : they helped in the harvesting and at scattering manures ; they held the long whip to steer the team in the plough till they could be trusted to help to tend the horses in the stable ; and finally, they passed between the plough-stilts. They grew up unlettered and absolutely ignorant ; but they had been made useful members of the rural society, they had been inured to all manner of hardships, and they felt themselves to be firmly rooted in their native soil.

The new labourer may pride himself on his independence, but he must pay the penalties. It is seldom he has lived for a lifetime under the same kindly master, as indeed masters in these times of depression have been shifting far more frequently. He is more or less on the move, and moving costs money ; there is less inducement to gather household goods about him and make himself a home. His connection with his employer being pure matter of bargain, there is seldom mutual regard, and they are ready to part on the slightest provocation. The labourer is more punctilious than he used to be as to confining himself to his strict duties. He may gratify a fit of temper by giving warning ; but

it is the master who has the whip-hand, and the master knows it. The supply of labour is much in excess of the demand. For one man sent away, there are half-a-dozen waiting to fill the place; and when all are strangers, and often eye-servants, one hand is almost as good as another. A certain number of permanent labourers were kept on every farm, but much of the heavy work is done nowadays by rushes. The best men take the permanent places; the rest have to shift as they can, in the intervals between special engagements. They pick up promiscuous jobs if they are handy and lucky. But the doubtful intervals of idleness naturally induce dissipated habits; and even men who are steady and saving can hardly help falling into debt. The small shopkeeper who gave credit to a certain point is compelled in self-defence to stop it summarily; then there is nothing left but to be sold up, with a choice between the poorhouse and migration. Ten to one the insolvent labourer wanders forth to try to better his luck, leaving wife and children to the care of the parish. The unemployed from the country districts go to glut the unskilled labour-markets in the cities. They likewise recruit the legion of the tramps who are a growing nuisance on all our great highways. Many of these amateur mendicants are much to be pitied when they start. They

have their warm affections like other folks, and may feel deeply the separation from those they love. The rustics, like the cats, are attached to localities; and it is a wrench to tear themselves away from the field-gates and the tombstones against which they have been in the habit of lounging from their boyhood. Born in fresh air, and brought up among the fields, they loathe the smoke and the gloom of the city. Even with chance coppers in their pockets, the glass across the counter of the gin-palace is a sad exchange for the settle in the village public. The honest adventurer would willingly find work, but successive disappointments dishearten him. With his ragged clothing and his hunger-drawn face, his appearance carries no recommendation. If character counts for anything, the presumption is that the penniless tramp has none. Appearances may at first have done him injustice, but the probability is that soon his indiscretions will confirm them. Nobody knows him; everybody suspects him; and with no sense of neighbourly opinion to keep him straight, he yields to the temptations that beset him in his affliction. Far from keeping his hands from picking and stealing, as he remembers to have been taught at the Sunday-school, he looks out for stray chances of pilfering; if he has the luck to find a lucrative job,

it is probably with some gang of local poachers ; till at last, the man who might have lived decently under the old system, drifts hopelessly down among the criminal and desperate classes.

Although it is certain that many labourers do far worse than formerly, of course a few do very much better. The management of machinery demands some little skill as well as steadiness, and although the work may in a great measure be matter of routine, yet the drivers of steam-tackle should have heads upon their shoulders. Then penny papers have been circulating everywhere, with cheap literature ; and although a little knowledge may often be a dangerous thing, it may prove invaluable if discreetly used. The labourer may prefer to the dull respectability of "penny readings" the boisterous popular demonstrations where voluble demagogues preach delusive doctrines and propound false figures with seductive rhetoric. Listening to fiery rhapsodies on his rights and his wrongs, he may possibly be betrayed into making a fool of himself. His purchases from the strolling pedlar or the book-stall in the fair, may include not only criminal romances in "penny dreadfuls," but the more pernicious tracts of socialists and atheists. On the other hand, he has picked up enough of geography to be aware of great countries beyond the ocean, where there is

elbow-room for all, good hope for the industrious, and possibilities of great fortunes for the fortunate. He is encouraged to think of improving his condition, of raising his children in the social scale ; so the more enterprising and intelligent of the class betake themselves to emigration, setting examples of successful adventure to their friends who are left behind.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE OLD AND THE NEW SPORTSMEN.

SHOOTING has been revolutionised in the last fifty years. In the admirable volumes of the "Badminton Library," Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey fixes 1840 as about the date when heavy bags began to be made. The railways have brought the most remote districts within comparatively easy reach of the capital; luxurious shooting-lodges have been rising everywhere, in the lonely glens and on the melancholy sea-shores; and Highland landowners obtain fabulous rents for solitudes that used to let for a trifle to the tacksmen who bred roving herds of hill-cattle. The changes in England have been at least as great, although they show themselves under different aspects. The grouse are swarming now on the northern moors, where formerly the scattered coveys were only to be circumvented by exceedingly laborious work. The old style of shooting has gone out on the southern manors with the antiquated

systems of agriculture. The setters and pointers, the spaniels and cockers, have almost disappeared; the survivors of our sporting dogs are the black-coated retrievers that follow the lines of guns at the heels of the keepers. Pheasants, and sometimes partridges, are hand-fed by hundreds or by thousands in the great shooting-districts. The solemn battue, for which the covers are kept sacred, has replaced the rough-and-ready fashion of free-and-easy sport. Developments in guns have had at least as much to do with the changes as either the railways or scientific farming. Flint-locks were replaced by percussion-caps, and the muzzle-loader has been superseded in turn by the handy breech-loader. Now all the odds are in favour of the shooter, where the game has not been taught to take care of itself by an absolute destitution of convenient cover.

The new fashions of shooting have found able advocates, who demonstrate beyond a doubt that contemporary shots have degenerated neither in keenness nor science, while the quickness and precision with which the best of them drop their game seem more like sleight-of-hand than mere steady practice. The veteran of half a century ago would be nowhere now at the hottest corner of one of the home coverts, in a scattering "bouquet" of rocketing pheasants; or behind one of the "batteries" on a bare Yorkshire moor with the

grouse whistling past him down the wind like so many skimming flights of sea-swallows. Yet our grandfathers were masters of the craft according to their lights, and deadly although necessarily deliberate shots, notwithstanding their primitive weapons and cumbrous accoutrements. Possibly distance may lend enchantment to fond reminiscences; but we doubt whether, on the whole, the sportsman of the old school had not the best of it. Assuredly his arrangements were more economical than ours; and he had such chances of rough but romantic shooting as seldom fall to the lot of his grandchildren. He loved hard walking, for its own sake; a little excitement went a long way with him, and he was steeled against disappointments. What with the slow shooting and the stiff loading, he was naturally satisfied with small bags. One's memory may not go back to the old flint single barrel; but "Tom Oakleigh," who brought out his 'Shooting Code' in 1838, tells us that even then there were sturdy conservatives who still clung affectionately to the venerable weapon. That was simply old-fashioned prejudice, for there could be no question as to the superiority of the percussion gun. Yet even the percussion muzzle-loader was a sore trial to the temper, and admirable discipline for an impetuous nature when the sport was good or the weather unfavourable.

We remember how impatient ejaculations would rise to the lips when birds were rising all around during the irritating process of loading. It was generally a case of more haste worse speed. You snatched at the powder-flask, which caught in the pocket-lining or slipped through the fingers. As you hurriedly poured in the charge from the spring shot-belt, half the pellets would go scattering down outside the barrel; the driving home the wadding with the slender and flexible ramrod was a work of time, toil, and trouble, with a reasonable probability of the snapping of the rod putting you *hors de combat* for the rest of the day. But the acme of provocation was in fumbling for the caps and fitting them to the nipples against time, and perhaps with half-frozen fingers. The rushing sound of wings in the air, the sight of ground-game scuttling through the underwood, mocked your impatience and irritated you to the verge of insanity, which, of course, put you off your shooting. In rain or sleet things were far worse. The powder-flask would get damp, and the powder would be caked in the mouth; the caps were saturated, in spite of "waterproof" pocket-linings, so that a miss-fire was as likely as not, even if you should be shooting at the first "cock" of the season. Then, as you fumbled over the pricker and the powder-flask, there seemed nothing for

it but suicide. Gradually, welcome improvements were introduced in the muzzle-loading apparatus, as in shooting costume. For it was astonishing how the gentlemen of the ancient school had stuck to the most inconvenient and uncompromising of garments. Scrope was as good a sportsman as ever lived; but in his volume on 'Deer-Stalking,' as in the "Oakleigh Shooting Code," we see the heroes of the episodes, whether in the Atholl corries or in the Yorkshire dales, scrambling over the rocks and worming themselves along the beds of the hill-streams in high chimney-pot hats and tight clinging cutaways. Their sons, as they had discarded blue evening swallowtails with brilliant brass buttons, and crimson under-waistcoats, betook themselves to sensible shooting-suits of loose-fitting tweeds or homespuns. And the clever mechanic soon came to the front, going forward hand in hand with the rational tailor. Eley improved the cap-linings, rendering them really tolerably waterproof, and made up various sizes of shot in wired cartridges of divers colours, so as to facilitate hard hitting at long ranges. Perhaps the greatest boon of all was the introduction of the heavy loading-rod, though it had to be carried like a side-arm, and was so far an encumbrance. But then the charge was thrust straight home by a strong arm, there

were no vexatious delays, and consequently there was considerably less of swearing at large. Altogether, men were more than satisfied with the progress of reform, when the adoption of the breech-loader, with its immediate popularity, landed us in the luxuries of a millennium of new patents and inventions.

Yet, as I have said, it is impossible not to look back regretfully on the days of the old sportsman. In blissful ignorance of all that was looming in the future, he had resigned himself to worries and annoyances for which he hoped no remedy. He rejoiced in the pleasures and advantages which his children have ceased to enjoy. Like the old master of harriers, he would turn out each morning of his life; and he never dreamed of leaving his coverts undisturbed. The tenants of those times gave him comparatively little trouble; they took their farms, calculating on damage from ground-game, and if there was nothing else in the woods, there was always abundance of rabbits. Nor is there any better fun than rabbit-shooting, over cheery terriers or spaniels, or some couples of merry beagles. The old sportsman got leisurely into his gaiters after breakfast, and called the keeper to consultation under the gun-room window. The keeper slung the game-bag, and he and his master went forth without any sort of ceremony.

The rough terriers or the silky spaniels, with the withes of bramble clinging to their coats, wormed themselves somehow through the roots of the furze-brakes, and tore madly through the gaps in the undergrowth. With the voices receding or approaching, or running rings, each echo rang responsive to the yelping chorus; and the flash of the gun followed the glimpse of the flick, as the rabbits broke from cover to shoot across the clearing. Many of them were missed, but not a few were rolled over; the bag was emptied when it became inconveniently heavy, and the contents hung up in the trees, in festoons, by one hind-leg passed through the other. If the farms were fairly looked after, there were always hares in abundance in the fields. Even the home-meadows were sure to be indifferently drained; there were great tufts of sedges and coarse grass in the rushy bottoms, where puss was always to be found at home, squatting in her form. As for the partridges in September, the whole estate was a paradise for them, inasmuch as innocence lulled them into false security. The puzzle for them was to pick out a bare spot, where they could dust their feathers in the sunshine between feeding-hours. When they were flushed by the dogs or the chance passage of a labourer, they had a choice of tempting hiding-places in each field they skimmed. The scythe

or the sickle never shaved the straw, and, with his quick-sighted marker and his close-hunting setters, the squire could follow surely the flight of the covey, and supply his table with certainty, although no pot-hunter. With its untrimmed hedgerows, its rank stubbles, and its shallow-drained fields, all England fifty years ago was one natural preserve, where the game was sure to be plentiful if the poachers were kept in check.

As for Scotland, sport in the Highlands was not as yet monopolised by millionaires. In the fascinating reminiscences of 'The Moor and the Loch,' Colquhoun mentions how, exactly fifty years ago, capital small grouse-ranges were to be rented for £150. A little before that time, some of the best of the famous Forfarshire grouse-shootings used to be lent in a friendly way to a neighbour by Lord Panmure, the father of the Crimean War Secretary. The old peer, who was a notorious *bon vivant*—the carouses of Brechin Castle are commemorated in the Memoirs of Constable, the publisher—thought himself fairly repaid by some consignments of West Indian turtle or an occasional hogshead of East Indian Madeira. St John's 'Sport in Moray' is one of the most delightful of sporting books. He does not tell us what he paid for his house and his own shootings at Invererne; but one is struck by the fact that he had free licence to range the moors and

the mountains for many leagues all around him. He lies out for successive days and nights stalking the red-deer, sleeping in the shielings of the shepherds, and shooting anything he chanced to come across. Nowadays, when the solitary sanctuaries of the deer are as regularly patrolled as Cheapside or Piccadilly, and are often enclosed for scores of miles with formidable wire-fencing, no man would dream of making as free as St John did with the preserves of his nearest and dearest relative. But even so lately as fifty years ago a goodly range of the Highlands was practically open to any man with decent credentials; and he might enjoy any extent of wild shooting to his heart's content if he did not mind "roughing it" in some clachan or change-house. Forests that have since fetched fancy prices, and which let easily for £2000 or £3000 a-year, were then the familiar poaching-grounds of the amphibious crofters, who went in fitfully for fishing, and smuggled when they had an opportunity. Scott tells us how a similar state of things had been existing somewhat earlier in the Border country. Dandy Dinmont, although merely a tenant-farmer, invited Captain Brown to shoot black-cock with him at Charlieshope; and Francis Tyrrel and Valentine Bulmer, putting up with Mistress Dodds at the "Cleikum Inn," had the run of the grouse-moors of the Laird of St Ronan's,

simply because their landlady was an old friend of the family. Though we must admit that in those days, when there were few regular keepers, in place of the present organised guards of gillies and watchers, the sportsman had to toil hard for comparatively little. Colquhoun says incidentally that ten or twelve brace of grouse were considered a satisfactory bag for three guns when the poachers were plentiful and the vermin abundant. But, on the other hand, if the bags were but moderate, they were wonderfully mixed, and even on moors so far to the south as those in the pet country of the Cockney tourist, between Loch Katrine and Loch Lomond, you might get anything from a golden eagle or a peregrine down to a jack-snipe. Each hill-cairn in Glenfalloch held its colony of badgers, and the wail of the wild-cat and the marten-cat on the prowl made melancholy music in the gloaming along the solitary lake-shores. Now the romantic element has been eliminated from Highland sport, and you kill your stag to the orders of the stalker, or shoot down your seventy brace of grouse in the most business-like manner under the directions of gillies who know each yard of the ground, and who have been busily exterminating all species of picturesque vermin, from golden eagles and hill-foxes down to carrion-crows and weasels. The most striking characteristic of contemporary

sport is, that it is extremely expensive. The shooting may be good and the game superabundant, but you pay dearly for the amusement in one shape or another. There are men, of course, who sponge upon their friends, or, to put it more politely, who are popular guests in country houses. But the travelling expenses of the wandering Nimrod of Fortune are sufficiently serious: he makes it a point of honour to be perpetually renewing his guns, and to be always up to the latest fashion in newfangled patents; the mere cost of the cartridges shot away by the ten-thousand is no trifle, and the tips to keepers and domestic attendants come to something considerable in the course of the year. As for the entertainers, they must be men of ample means, if not absolute millionaires. The gentleman who sees company at his own country seat fills the house up to the garrets for the grand battues. Fathers who give similar receptions in turn, come accompanied by their wives and their fascinating daughters: there are feasting and sounds of revelry by night, below stairs as well as above, and brilliant toilets for the informal balls and improvised dances show that the ladies mean business as well as the men. Even in the Highlands, the old-fashioned lodges where two or three sportsmen going to the north *en garçon* used to make the best of it between

“a but and a ben,” have been replaced for the most part by magnificent castellated mansions, with any amount of accommodation “for a family of consequence.” The hosts entertain a succession of guests, and the guests naturally seldom go so far for a mere flying visit. All edibles, except game, salmon, and mutton, must be imported, and the cost of housekeeping goes up accordingly—as it rises in an inverse ratio to the thermometer, in Swiss inns like those on the Riffel or the Weggischhorn. As there is a troop of servants within doors and about the stables, so there is a host of watchers without. The master of the sports and revels has his special police, who patrol every height and keep guard over each corrie. The tenant of the old “lodge,” which was really a whitewashed cottage, was content to travel by steamer, and to be shot out with his portmanteaus, gun-cases, and the mixed stores from Morell, on the shore of the neighbouring loch. The new man who brings a wife, and entertains ladies and ladies’-maids, has probably made many miles of smooth carriage-road over bog and moorland; and the road, which is annually ravaged by the winter torrents, must be restored and maintained by a regular corps of road-menders. It has been roughly estimated that in the mere shooting outlay each stag that is shot and gralloched costs £50, and

each brace of game little less than a guinea. If we include the indirect as well as the direct expenses, they probably cost from 30 to 50 per cent more; and what would our frugal grandfathers have thought of such extravagance? It is difficult to forecast the future of Highland shootings. The rents that have risen at fabulous rates, begin to show signs of falling in common with all others; and those Highland lairds have been undoubtedly wise in their generation who have been selling instead of letting to the wealthy Southerners. It is safe to predict that they will never get such prices again as in the golden days that are gone. Still, if democratic legislation does not do away with private rights and forest sanctuaries, these mountain playgrounds must always be in request; and possibly if the southern landowners and native capitalists should be played out, or forced at least to fall back upon retrenchment, colonial and American millionaires may come to the rescue. It is certain that under the changed conditions good shooting is only within reach of the rich, and that consequently, save in so far as they are interested as consumers—and they do consume an enormous quantity of rabbits—the democracy can have small concern in encouraging sport.

CHAPTER XVII.

OLD AND NEW WATERING-PLACES.

THE watering-places that have been growing up all round our coasts have brought health to many, wealth to a few, and recreations of one kind or another to all who can afford to pay for them. Science has discovered strange diseases, and ingenious doctors have been diagnosing new varieties of complaints, which are at least as often on the nerves as in the body. The modern refinements of our mortal frailties give new interests to English life. Fifty years ago nobody's nerves needed tone, except in the cases of certain hysterical fine ladies, and of *malades imaginaires* of both sexes, with money to spare, who exhausted the resources of a simple pharmacopœia, as other connoisseurs indulged themselves in pictures or china. Doubtless there were the good old-fashioned diseases, generally recognised and stolidly endured. Sir George Trevelyan has graphically described in

his Life of Fox the gout that was the hereditary curse of high-living humanity, when every gentleman drank deep after dinner, and when famous statesmen, like the younger Pitt, primed themselves with port for senatorial triumphs. The poorer people resigned themselves to democratic epidemics like the smallpox and the fevers, which desolated their homes and filled the churchyards. The gouty *roués* and squires, when the pains and worry became intolerable, sought relief at the "Wells" in the inland counties, which had often been celebrated for their healing virtues since the Roman occupation. No one but a man of considerable fortune could make those costly voyages to Corinth, and go to recruit the frame for fresh excesses where dissipation and extravagance were the rule under the sway of some superfine master of the ceremonies. People in straitened circumstances nursed their maladies at home, and died peaceably in their places of business or above their shops under the treatment of the nearest doctor. Now we have changed all that. We have found out that we have livers and nerves as well as lungs and a stomach. We have become connoisseurs in mineral waters, advertised as sovereign specifics, and are curious as to changes of air and scene. Above all, we universally recognise the imperative need for recreation; the annual outing is

become a regular institution with all who can in any way afford it; and anybody who is ailing and aching can take a trip to the sea, thanks to the cheap facilities offered by the competing railways.

Fifty years ago, in the days of the coaches and post-chaises, the marine watering-places were few and but little frequented. A score of coaches were running daily on the Brighton road. But Brighton was exceptionally favoured. Even then it was within easy reach of the capital; the first gentleman in Europe had brought it into fashion, and glorified it by the erection of his fantastic marine palace. Squares and crescents were already covering the slopes around "the fishing village of Brighthelmstone," mentioned casually in the 'Natural History of Selborne'; already the visitors could sun themselves on the beginnings of the King's Road, and indulge in brass bands and sea breezes on the original Chain Pier. Theodore Hook tells us in 'Jack Brag' that a spirited architect was working miracles in masonry at St Leonards-on-the-Sea, but the novelist would have spoken less enthusiastically of those marvels could he have looked forward into the future. Jack went on to Eastbourne, where the new town which had begun to spring up by the sea was still cramped between the "Sea Houses" and the Battery,

although the air and the prospects from the Downs were already attracting Londoners. Mr Brag had previously put up, with his friend Lord Tom, at "The Ship" at Dover; and Dover was even then well provided with hotels, as most Continental tourists broke the journey there. The patrons of Dover were birds of passage, and comparatively aristocratic; but Margate had long been a place of popular resort, as from time immemorial it had been a port of departure for Holland and the Low Countries. The Margate hoy, immortalised by Charles Lamb, brought its cargoes of Cockneys regularly from the wharves of the Tower, attracted by the sands, the cool winds, and the sea-bathing; and already keepers of cheap lodgings were doing a brisk business with families habituated at home to overcrowding. The famous Pantiles of Tunbridge Wells were still fashionably frequented in the season; though the Sussex town had scarcely changed its aspect since they were trodden by the hard-living Lord March of 'The Virginians' and by the pompous and highly respectable author of 'Pamela.' But beyond the metropolitan districts and the home counties there was nothing along the southern coasts in the shape of a fashionable watering-place till you came to Cowes, the headquarters of the yacht squadrons, or to Weymouth, which had been favoured by

“Farmer George.” In the interior of the island there was Bath in the west and Harrogate in the north, and both were crowded with cripples—with the lame, the halt, and the rheumatic. The frequenters of Bath and Harrogate went thither with a serious purpose; they placed themselves in the hands of the physicians, and ceased to be free agents. They must submit to the autoocracy of the master of the ceremonies; they might go into society of an evening, and solace themselves with rubbers of long whist; but through the days they must dip, drink, and diet themselves. At that time, what were literally watering-places merely adapted themselves to the wants of their visitors, and seldom supplied more than what was strictly necessary. There were antiquated inns of great reputation, with their gloomy coffee-rooms, or the expensive private sitting-rooms, which were more dismal, if that were possible. If you did not hire a private residence, which might be more or less commodious, you had to rough it in the most primitive of lodgings, and be fleeced by a remorseless landlady. The guests must have been patients in every sense of the word, to put up with the old-fashioned health resorts and fancy them places of pleasure.

The railways brought a new era of prosperity and luxury to people eager to profit by the new opportunities. Scott and his imitators in poetry

and romance had been educating their countrymen to appreciate scenery and historical associations. They had been the best of friends to the coaching and posting interests ; but coaching and posting were costly and tedious. With the railways the tide of travelling began to swell, till it has overflowed each nook and corner in the country. Families with money had fallen into the fashion. But families could not be always on the move, so they sought out salubrious spots where they could settle for their holidays ; and naturally, for the sake of the children, they set their faces towards the sea. The old, familiar resorts were soon overcrowded, though building did its best to keep pace with the inundation. Landowners, doctors, local lawyers, and capitalists all over the country, began to think seriously of profiting by the new movement. It was all a question of cash and enterprise. There was scarcely a neglected seaport, a fishing hamlet, or a sheltered creek along our shores that could not put forward its claims to patronage. There were unrivalled sands for safe bathing ; there were lofty chalk cliffs or health-breathing downs ; there was an exposure either balmy or marvelously bracing ; or, at the worst, there was convenient access from some busy manufacturing city whose smoke-poisoned inhabitants were nowise fastidious. So stranded seaports, founded by

the plunder of ravaging Danes and enriched by the golden fleeces of the days of the Plantagenets, were suddenly launched on a flood of prosperity. New watering-places grew quickly into note and popularity from the small beginnings of a solitary coastguard station or a couple of fishers' huts—like Bournemouth, where Lord Malmesbury remembers to have bagged snipe on the swampy site of the public gardens. Now there is a rich embarrassment of choice, in scenery to gratify all tastes, and in air to suit all complaints and constitutions. You desire to be braced and set up—you may go to Scarborough, to Whitby, to Cromer, to Lowestoft, or to Ramsgate. If an irritable throat or enfeebled chest is to be soothed in a balmy atmosphere, you may repair to Bournemouth, beneath its sheltering heights and pine woods; to Torquay, basking below its rocks in its semi-tropical shrubberies; or, better still, to the Lizard or Penzance, where positively the mean temperature of an English year is scarcely lower than that of overrated Naples. If you delight in picturesque coast scenery, you can choose between downs and cliffs. For downs, with their broad and glorious sea-views and the life-giving air of the rolling *plateaux* dipping down into sheltered dells with their copses, manor-houses, and lichen-covered farm-steadings, nothing approaches what Gilbert

White magniloquently describes as that “magnificent range of mountains” stretching westwards from Beachy Head towards the Solent. For rocks and high-crested heathy hills, you have the half-savage districts in North Somerset and North Devon, hanging over the Bristol Channel, with the beauties and traditions interwoven in our literature by the genius of Kingsley, Blackmore, and Besant. One need ask no better headquarters for excursions than Ilfracombe, or Lynton and Lynmouth guarding the sea-gate to Exmoor; while, by way of contrast, there is Clovelly in its flowery cleft, with the *cul-de-sac* inaccessible to carriages, and Westward Ho, with its airy links, the headquarters of the Western golfers. But there are natives of our sea-girt isles so unhappily constituted as to detest the sea in every shape; their livers are affected by the sea-air, as their stomachs are upset by the sea-motion. In that case, they may fall back on the sylvan beauties of rural England, or withdraw themselves to the wooded valleys of Wales. There, too, the choice of retreats is inexhaustible, with endless variations in atmosphere and landscapes. At Leamington you have soft but somewhat enervating air among the oaks and elms of the most English of English parks, and the immortal memories of Shakespeare or Scott. From Malvern you may

either climb the slippery turf of the hillsides to the Worcestershire and Herefordshire beacons, looking out over something like a dozen of counties ; or you may plunge down into the windings of the Wye valley, where the thick foliage flourishes in a perpetual drip. From Buxton and Matlock you may explore peaks, precipices, and fairy caverns under weeping skies ; from Harrogate, Ilkley, or Ben Rhydding, you may dip into the depths of the Yorkshire dales—hear the crow of the grouse-cock or the whistle of the curlew on the high moors—or lose yourself in dreamy recollections of the past, in the cloistered loneliness of the ruined Yorkshire abbeys. In short, our English watering-places are lavishly rich in every sort of romantic attractions, but it is to be feared that they are chiefly frequented by Philistines. *Æsthetic* and intellectual fascinations are either ignored or made the hypocritical pretext for a picnic, with the inevitable consequences of over-eating and indigestions. The gayest society goes by preference to the sea, specially affecting the places where prices are most extravagant. It loves crowds and limits its strolls to the esplanades, except when a boating or a riding party can be made indirectly to pay. For with shrewd men of business and the sharp mothers of marriageable daughters the holiday season becomes another form of speculative in-

vestment. At the dances and *tables d'hôte* of the grand hotels they may make eligible acquaintances with golden youth and men of position who would never dream of Sheffield or Manchester. Young ladies who can be trusted to take care of themselves read novels under sunshades on the sands, and are innocently open to romantic adventures. A casual introduction can be pleasantly followed up in hotels, where there are countless occasions for flirtation. Half-a-dozen dazzling toilets may be made in the course of the day, as at Newport, Saratoga, or Trouville. The impressionable idler, sorely bored with his own society, and with much superfluous time upon his hands, is naturally susceptible to the seductions of the sirens, and if he finds that the enchantress is an heiress, of course he is all the better pleased. It used to be said that marriages were made in heaven; now many of them, among the well-to-do middle classes, are made in the hotels of the marine paradises between Scarborough and Torquay.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OLD AND NEW PROFESSIONS.

THE question as to what is to be done with our sons is daily becoming more difficult to answer. The struggle for subsistence is daily more severe ; confidence is shaken in the time-honoured belief that patience and industry must pull through to a competence, and the odds against gaining a fortune are steadily lengthening. The “professions” are overcrowded, and if there are still prizes to be won, the profits have in many cases diminished. High Church preferments, for example, are now by no means necessarily synonymous with opulence, and many an incumbent of what used to be a wealthy living is painfully practising the apostolic virtue of poverty. Something similar might be said of certain branches of the law ; and physic, although its fees and its aggregate gains have increased, is depressed in the markets by the mobs of medical students on promotion. The old-fashioned solicitors who

used to live comfortably upon snug land-agencies, have instructions to sell the estates which gave them the bulk of their easy incomes. Happily for them, they hold on in the meantime, since no estate can be sold on satisfactory terms. The future everywhere is full of uncertainty. Land-owning is no longer the pleasant and lucrative occupation it used to be. The landlord is docked of his privileges, and perpetually reminded of his duties and disabilities. Tenants clamour for reductions, and throw up their farms, and he is ground between the weight of encumbrances and jointures and the acres of agricultural land that are flung upon his hands. There are capitalists and capitalists, of course; the fortunate few continue to accumulate, but they accumulate to the prejudice of the many. It is only by close shaving and clever navigation that the shipping interest steers clear of general insolvency. Cotton-spinners complain of crushing tariffs and foreign competition; manufacturers, like the bard of the "Heathen Chinees," say that they are being ruined by cheap foreign labour. Copper is going for a song; collieries are limiting their output; and consequently, in all departments of labour there have been retrenchment and a reduction of the number of employees. There is less money nowadays to launch younger sons; and the

prospects that used to be considered as safe investments are now hazardous speculations. On the other hand, and as a natural consequence, caste prejudices are breaking down. The line is still drawn by the upper middle classes at what is denominated as "trade" in the dictionaries; for every sort of industrial and commercial occupation used to be classed indiscriminately as "trade" by a contemptuous aristocracy. Now, so long as he does not actually start in business as a butcher or a grocer, the youth of good birth and breeding has almost *carte blanche*. He may not weigh legs of mutton across a counter, or superintend the making up of packages of tea and sugar beneath a sign; but he may sell Hyson and Himalayan teas from offices in Mark Lane, advertising his business *ad libitum* by circular; and as licence increases with each league of distance from London, he is privileged to any extent as to pursuits in foreign countries or the colonies. The cowboy in Texas, or the proprietor of an Australian public, so long as he does not gratuitously parade his calling, may keep his name on the candidates' list of fashionable clubs, and come home to a cordial welcome from his acquaintances, if he has the luck to "strike ile," literally or metaphorically.

Fifty years ago, for a gentleman "born and

bred," the choice of a profession was strictly limited. There was the trinity of learned pursuits — law, physic, and divinity — and the calling of the doctor was rather looked down upon. There was a probable partnership in industrial or mercantile pursuits. There were the army and the navy; and for a few aristocrats with influential political connections, there was diplomacy. Anxious parents were guided in some measure by the gifts or defects of their sons, and in a greater degree by obvious openings. Anything like a snug family living necessarily settled the question, though the candidate for orders might have been the curse of his schoolmasters, and been rusticated at his college for scandalous indiscretion. If he had fair abilities, and was ready of speech, he probably went to the Bar, in the confident expectation that it must conduct him to the Bench. The sons of established mercantile firms succeeded to the family connection. British trade, though it might have its relapses, was expansive on the whole; and solicitors who had long done a lucrative business, looked forward to the connection with their clients being lasting. The Church offered fair chances to youths of insinuating manners and irreproachable morals; even if they could not count upon the certainty of a parish when they had qualified, they had always the prospect of

an advantageous marriage. The navy was never popular with parents: unless a youth had good friends at the Admiralty, he had to climb painfully, hand over hand, to the top-gallant trees, and was being perpetually paid off and left out in the cold. But scapegraces, or boys with little of the bookworm in them, naturally betook themselves to the sister service. The army was the refuge, not of the destitute, but of gentlemanly and rather graceless lads with a small independence. In time of war it was all very well; they won their way or bought their steps, or they were effectually provided for. In time of peace they vegetated in home or foreign garrisons; they were tempted into dissipation or extravagance; or if they developed intellectual tastes, they were bored to death by the pipe-clay and small-talk of the regimental messes. The numerous officers in the Company's service were more fortunate, and a grand outlet for superfluous energy that East Indian service was. They had the chance of campaigning in at least two of the Presidencies, and the excitement of field-sports in all the three. They could even shoot snipe in the compounds of Madras, and kill duck within sound of the echoes from the "Towers of Silence" at Bombay. With decent prudence and forethought they could live on their pay, from the day that they

first set foot in India. As for the "writers," their fortunes were made from the date of their civil appointments, if they only kept clear of cards, usurers, and brandy-pawnee. In so many years, in ordinary course of advancement, they came like Jos Sedley to be collectors at a Boggleywallah; and when they showed exceptional powers of administration, they might rise to be the satraps of vast provinces. Nothing is more strikingly significant of the grandeur and resources of the empire, than the fact that for generations it opened so magnificent an outlet to the impecunious mediocrity of the upper middle classes.

But it is to be remarked that, with the exception of the direct military appointments to India, the preparation for all these vocations either cost a great deal of money or involved allowances of indefinite duration. Generally the harassed father of a family had to reckon with the one outlay and the other. If his son went into the army, after buying him a commission he must support him. The son who had elected for holy orders could not be left to starve on the pay of a curate. The youth with the gifts of a Galen, who aspired to a golden harvest of guinea fees, had to make up his mind for weary waiting in the meantime. As to the aspirant at the Bar, condemned to imaginary seclusion in chambers, in perpetual expectation of briefs, it was still

more the case of casting bread upon the waters, on the vague chance of finding it again after very many days. The parents of fifty years ago, if they had money at all, made up their minds that they must make certain sacrifices for their offspring. By hook or by crook, the means were to be provided, not only to send them to a good school, but to college; by hook or by crook, when their academical education was completed, the money to start them fairly in one of the legitimate professions was to be forthcoming. Those old traditions still survive among people who have no pecuniary reason to break with them. If the "governor" has only to sell stocks or draw his cheques, he still disposes of his sons as he would have dealt by them formerly. But now, in nine cases out of ten, he is always under compulsion constituting himself into a consulting committee of ways and means. His wish is—and small blame to him—to float his children as frugally as possible. The girls must be provided for as well as the boys. Money is always hard to come by, and he is loath to compromise himself by future engagements. So that he is induced to cut short expenses and liabilities; to cut the painter, throw some provisions into the skiff, and leave the young folks to drift and shift for themselves. In some cases, although at considerable preliminary expense, in so persuading

himself he acts wisely. A quick and intelligent lad is worth cramming expensively for the competitive examinations, in which he should almost certainly come out a winner. The civil service, whether at home or in India, is an independence or opulence as the case may be. The consular service in China and Japan is a respectable and well-remunerated career; while student-interpretships, with prompt despatch to the East, are the stepping-stones to excellent and exciting consular appointments. But if the father grudge the heavy fees of the coach, or mistrust the chances of even a promising colt being placed; or if he knows that the colt is not worth the training,—then he is apt to be guilty of cruel penny-wisdom. In the old days he would have felt that only certain careers were open to his son, and that it was his business to make the best of them, and try to push the boy. Now there are many newfangled ways of getting forward in life, where the start is cheap, but the future problematical. Our colonies have been growing fast in the half-century; but formerly, when the son of a respectable family emigrated, he was pretty sure to be provided with sufficient capital. If he were content to bide his time, and pick up experience in serving an apprenticeship, there was no need for the capital being very considerable. You might lease a tract of pastoral terri-

tory at the antipodes for a trifle, the only limit to its boundaries being the means of stocking it; and in those golden days, barring droughts and disease, in a dozen or a score of years the small adventurer might be a squatter capitalist. Now, with what is the bagatelle of a few thousands, even the intelligent young emigrant, fairly trained to farming at home, has comparatively little chance. Land has gone up; "cockatoos" perching in flights near the water on their small proprietary plots have cramped the squatters; head-stations and outlying homesteads have been built solidly at heavy expense, and leagues upon leagues of tall and stiff wire-fencing separate the grazing-grounds from the encroachments of quarrelsome neighbours. Australasia, with its growing wealth and population, is being sealed to the enterprise of young Englishmen of small capital. In Canada, to say nothing of the winters and the mosquitoes, they can hope for little better than a bare subsistence, even by a life of industry and privation. So the parent, casting about as to what he shall do with them, probably sends them as "cowboys" to Texas, or in a similar capacity, though with a different designation, to the boundless pampas of Southern America. The passage and the outfit cost little; the adventurer gets his keep and pay from the first; the paternal conscience sets itself tolerably

at ease by vague promises of indefinite future assistance. The broad Atlantic is between the boy and his home : henceforth he is his own master. Perhaps he does fairly well, makes friends, gets on, and finds luck in his favour. We hear from time to time of phenomenal examples of success ; of marvellous steadiness ; and of a succession of happy hits, crowned very likely by a wealthy marriage. The conqueror of Fortune either settles in his kingdom in the new world in patriarchal luxury, or he comes home to be cordially welcomed by his friends and advertised by the promoters of transatlantic cattle - companies. We hear little of the nine lads out of ten who have either gone almost inevitably to the bad, or resigned themselves sorrowfully to social degradation. For the cowboy must keep bad or low company ; his recreations, when he leaves the prairies for the towns in his short holidays, are liquoring, card-playing, and standing drink out of his earnings ; and so the wages he might save are periodically squandered, as his better nature is demoralised.

Nothing but a "fluke" or a succession of flukes can pull these impecunious and inexperienced adventurers through. But, at all events, they are cast off their parents' hands and consciences. Much the same sort of thing goes on at home, although without that advantage from

the parental point of view. The least promising opening is eagerly welcomed. A boy is hoisted on to a stool in some office, with no definite expectation of anything beyond a poorly paid clerkship. It is true that his start cost little, but he is perpetually pressing claims on the parental benevolence; and when he makes his love-match and has a family of his own, the encumbrance may be perpetuated to all eternity. Had the boy boasted brains of decent quality, it would have paid better to sink some capital in bringing him up to the Bar. No doubt the highest branch of the legal profession is exceptionally overcrowded; no doubt briefs to the unknown come in the first place through favour and connections: still, the persevering and industrious young barrister must be a fool if he cannot, sooner or later, make sure of his bread and butter. He may never sit on the Metropolitan Bench in the Courts of Appeal; but there are endless appointments open to intelligent mediocrity, in the shape of police magistracies and judgeships of county courts. In that and in kindred professions he may strike aside into byways, which should lead to comfortable competencies if not to fame and wealth. Not a few chancellors, chief-justices, and distinguished statesmen have reached high office in the olden time through drudgery and severe

privations, and by the doors of the reporters' gallery. Now reporting is become a profession of itself, at which men of moderate ambition have been content to stop. Now daily journalism is a trade to which barristers are specially recommended, not only by their personal tastes and by their mental training, but by the special circumstance of their being located in the Inns of Court, within easy call of the leading newspaper offices. Through successful leader-writing political relations may be formed, and secretaryships to prominent and powerful politicians are the stepping-stones to permanent and lucrative appointments. There are private secretaryships of all sorts, from that to the Indian Viceroy, which virtually means the deputy-governorship of our Eastern empire—from that to a friendly first minister of the Crown, which means the pick of eligible semi-sinecures—down to the service of such a patriotic and philanthropic M.P. as was declined after an interview by Nicholas Nickleby. But the great drawback to even the most tempting of the byways by which a man may get on is their precariousness. You may be made a magistrate *in partibus* among the Zulus or the Kaffirs; you may drop into a lucrative land-agency, monarch of all about you for nine months in the year, with the best of hunting, shooting, and fishing; you may be sent

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abroad as superintendent of a mine, crushing its thousands of tons of profitable ore every month, and employing its hundreds of whites and browns. But colonial appointments are cut down, or the mine may be flooded, or you may quarrel with a liberal employer or be bereaved of him : then in middle age, with a wife and children and expensive habits, you are suddenly landed in a *cul-de-sac*, and have to try luck with small hope of such another chance. Nor can we conceive a more melancholy state of humiliation than being suddenly reduced from opulent independence to stint and to scrimp, to beg and to borrow. The old-fashioned careers are still the safest, though you be fettered by crowds and grope along in the dimness ; while in following strange tracks across unsurveyed country, one is apt to be led astray by the flickering Wills-o'-the-wisp, and to be bogged in some quagmire when the powers begin to fail.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE OLD AND THE NEW CLERGYMEN.

ONE of the most familiar characters in English fiction is the parson; and for pictures of clergymen of all ages and classes, we need only turn to the pages of popular novelists. In Fielding and Smollett, as in the romances of eighteenth-century society of our own contemporaries, the divines have had somewhat hard measure dealt them, and seldom show to great advantage. Parson Adams, among the antiquated sketches, stands out as a favourable exception; and the parson, who was emphatically a muscular Christian, flourishing his cudgel and making free with his massive fists, would scarcely be considered nowadays a creditable sample of the cloth. No doubt the novelist generally selects those imaginary idiosyncrasies in which contrasts and contradictions of character may give the most picturesque effects. Yet I have the author's personal authority for assert-

ing that the Devonshire parsons in 'The Maid of Sker' were actually portraits; and as true to the life as the family chaplain in 'Dorothy Forster,' who had already found his prototype in Sampson of 'The Virginians.' They lived in an atmosphere of loose social morality; and preferment from the highest places to the lowest went, for the most part, by something worse than mere favour. It may be taken for granted that well-informed novelists, in the interests of their art, have rather exaggerated the virtues and redeeming features of their reverent heroes. A veritable "chaplain of the fleet" must surely have been more utterly degraded by his scandalous traffic in what was sacred, and by nightly symposia in "The Rules" with dissipated associates. A Sampson broken in to fetch and to carry, and to pander to the vices of unscrupulous patrons, could hardly have been capable of sublimities of self-sacrifice, when one of his honourable principals came to pecuniary grief. A courtly Bishop Tusher, who had won the lawn-sleeves by stifling his conscience in suave hypocrisy, strikes us as more unpleasantly true to the life. In those days, when a younger son or a near kinsman did not drop naturally into a family living, the frequent path to preferment was a disreputable marriage. The Church, with many virtuous and God-fearing

divines, was nevertheless so rotten that it was ripe for reformation. The end of the eighteenth century saw a happy change, which must be attributed in great measure to the Wesleyan revival. There was a shaking of the bones and an awakening to a sense of the proprieties under the influence of earnest and impassioned preachers. Not only did clerical manners begin to mend, but the pugnacious instincts of the more energetic churchmen were excited by the popularity of dissenting chapels, and the fervour of those itinerant orators who denounced the Laodiceans and their works. When a Dinah drew a congregation on the village-green, the good but Gallio-like Mr Irwine would feel the spur of emulation, and possibly be troubled by serious prickings of conscience. Patrons of livings paid a greater regard to appearances; parsons threw a cloak over their foibles. Yet the conversion of the clergy as a body was necessarily very gradual, since their sympathetic parishioners were generally tolerant. They took kindly to a pastor who, like worthy Mr Gilfil in the 'Scenes of Clerical Life,' smoked long pipes and preached short sermons. Mrs Patten, well persuaded that she had never been a sinner, resented the visits of the well-meaning Mr Barton, because he would insist on talking to her of "her need o' mercy."

She had a sure certificate to character from the cheese-factor, who said her cheeses were always to be depended on, and so she counted confidently on salvation. Other church folk, to the full as self-satisfied, went on liberal principles of give and take. The parson might say his say of a Sunday: they either slept through his sermon, or listened complacently, as if it concerned anybody rather than themselves. Through the week, and at home in the parsonage, he was free to enjoy himself as he pleased. If he had slipped through good connections into his comfortable living, it was understood that by his birth and education he belonged to the caste of the squires. Any worldly-minded tastes he might have were hereditary prerogatives. If he were of an active habit of body, he might have a catholic appreciation of sports, from badger-baiting to ratting. So late as sixty years ago, there were sturdy clerical conservatives like the Rev. Mr Lingen in 'Felix Holt,' who lamented "the comparative flatness of all existing sports compared with cock-fighting;" as the dignified Mr Maximus Debarry never hesitated "to swear a little when the point of joke seemed to demand it." But perhaps the typical beneficed clergyman of seventy years back was a well-nurtured, well-meaning, and easy-going man. Though he might have gone into the Church for its

loaves and fishes, he had the honest intention of doing well by his flock. His discourses were dry, doctrinal, and unemotional. Shirking of offensive personalities and the labours of thoughtful composition, he consulted the feelings of his congregation. It was seldom, indeed, that he warmed into eloquence, nor did he care to awaken those spiritual cravings of which he had slight personal experience. But he was ready to recognise the practical claims upon him. He might be autocratic in his bearing and brief of speech, but he was always rattling the loose change in his pockets; the contents of his larder, and even the old port in his cellars, were always at the service of the sick and infirm. For the rest, the rector or vicar, who virtually recognised no restraining authority, pursued the even tenor of his habits and tastes, in serene indifference to newfangled notions. If he had been wont to "sport pink" and spend his substance on horse-flesh in his college days, he would still, by a strange and recurring coincidence, turn up on his well-bred cob at the cover-side. Or if he cared for many a quiet day's shooting with the neighbouring squires, there could be no reasonable objection to that. Not unfrequently the dignified divine of ample means was a sybarite of the Epicurean school, intellectually as well as physically. With his theological books about him, he

was much more likely than his kinsman at the Hall to make himself something of a literary *dilettante*. If there were an apostolic virtue he specially practised, it was that of hospitality. He had a good cook and a capital cellar. He was the Dr Gaster or the Dr Opimian of Love Peacock's novels, which are too much neglected now, though they well deserve to be remembered. Professional considerations apart, he much preferred the Classics to the Fathers; and if his predilections were not positively pagan, he was, nevertheless, tinged with cultured scepticism. He cherished a placid devotion to all that was agreeable and beautiful, from richly bound Elzevirs to a sumptuous table of mahogany hand-polished to the blackness of ebony. No man could be more pleasant in mixed company; with his courtly and somewhat cynical gallantry, he was a universal favourite with the fair sex. He stuck to the port and Madeira with an infinite gusto, yet his clerical self-assertion kept conviviality within bounds, when the cloth had been cleared away and the ladies had withdrawn.

The most life-like studies of the clergy of former generations, shading down into the men of the present, are by Lord Lytton, Anthony Trollope, and Mrs Oliphant. Mr Dale of Hazeldean has seldom been surpassed, partly, perhaps, because he has no pronounced characteristics.

Mrs Oliphant's 'Chronicles of Carlingford' and her other clerical works are admirable: they show the range of the author's knowledge and sympathies, and her wonderfully comprehensive appreciation of all sorts and conditions of divines. Naturally, from early associations she is most sympathetically at home with the homely Scotch ministers; but she has learned to identify herself almost as happily with Church dignitaries "within the Precincts," and with the dashing young Dissenters like Beecham or Vincent, who were scandalised by the vulgarity of the "Connection" that paid them. Yet one may predict that the creations of Trollope are most likely to survive. His long gallery, rich in varieties, is almost exhaustive. He seems to have had an instinct for analysing the clerical temperament. Till we had read his Autobiography, it was hard to believe that he knew nothing of society in a cathedral close, previously to writing those books of his on Barchester. He strips stoles and surplices, and shows the men in their high-buttoning waistcoats, with the frailties and the passions that are common to humanity. It was comparatively easy to conceive good Bishop Grantley—a beneficent prelate like Van Mildert of Durham, who had attained to extreme old age in an accumulation of earthly honours. His genial religion had always sat lightly on him,

and he had had small personal experience of the sore temptations which beset his more lowly and less fortunate brethren. His son the archdeacon, Bishop Proudie, Mr Slope, Mr Arabin, and even the careworn Quiverful, have been fighting the battle of life, beset by its cares and anxieties. We see them continually combating more or less directly with the world, the flesh, and the devil; and they are consequently more commendable from the artistic point of view. Men like the Vicar of Framley are comparatively commonplace: like the poor, we shall have them always with us in any numbers. By no means insensible to their grave spiritual responsibilities, they would willingly make the best of both worlds. Nothing can be more true to nature than the portrait of Mr Robarts, proud of his preaching powers, languidly ambitious of advancement, reasonably attentive to the easy parochial duties in which he is helped by a curate; never so much in his element as when bargaining for a hunter or looking critically into the frog of a horse's foot, yet ready to fall on his knees in an agony of penitence, when recalled to a better mind by Mr Crawley, his plain-spoken neighbour. As for the incumbent of Hoggstock, in *Crawley*, Trollope has excelled himself; as in that pathetic study of a blighted life, he suggests the darker side of the unequal

distribution of preferments, in which long-trying faith may fail and patience die out in despair.

It must be admitted that things have mended in many respects ever since the neglected Crawley went half-mad among the Hoggstock brick-makers. There are still prizes in the clerical profession, and we should be exceedingly sorry to see them further reduced in value. Considering the constant claims on their benevolence, their heavy responsibilities, and their incessant and manifold work, no man except some Radical *doctrinaire* dare assert that our prelates are over-paid. The days of rich pluralities, of neglected parishes, of idle absentees like Dr Stanhope of Barchester—leading luxurious lives on the Italian lakes—are gone by. Indeed the doubt is now, whether, with increasing agricultural depression, and with the agitation against tithes, ordinary and extraordinary, the cathedral dignitary will be able to continue “in residence,” or the ordinary parish priest to exist at all. The charges have been growing as the incomes have been diminishing. Formerly, when a curate was engaged at all, he had generally to content himself with starvation wages. Now, the employment of curates is essential, when there is work to be done; and although the salary paid may be by no means exorbitant, yet it is a heavy drain on the incumbent’s reduced receipts. Now,

curates who are conscious of parts and gifts never dream of settling down and submitting to be forgotten. They are always moving and shifting about all over the country. To do them justice, they are generally active men, punctual in attendance on frequent services, and ready to tramp the parish on visitations in all weathers. But they mount into the pulpit as on a *cheval de bataille*; and they look on each parochial success as the stepping-stone to a more profitable or prominent position. If the revenues of the cathedral chapters are coming down, pay and popularity are always to be sought in the charges of great cities and in the fashionable watering-places. What with cheap railway fares and frequent trains, the humblest country clergyman may always have his chance. Fluency is more common than fervent eloquence, and he may make a hit with a more cultivated congregation, which seeks sensation or something better, and welcomes a new star. A promising recruit is a gain, as he will probably "draw." The city clergyman, unless he be morbidly jealous, is glad that his curates should be attractive preachers. To say nothing of the satisfactory discharge of their higher duties, the pews are filled, and the offertories are increased. And when a curate is in favour with a wealthy or fashionable flock, it is his own

fault if he does not find everything plain sailing. He has only to practise moderate patience, and wait for the preferment that will surely come. Beneficed in due time, he preaches, he organises, he lends his name and eloquence to missions, temperance, and meritorious movements in general ; he electrifies his audience from religious platforms in Exeter Hall and elsewhere ; till, finally, he is pretty certain to have the chance of a bishopric, after the most influential and energetic head-schoolmasters have been provided for.

CHAPTER XX.

THE OLD AND THE NEW JOURNALISTS.

THE growth of the Press is the phenomenon of the last half-century. Previous to the passing of the Reform Bill there were but eleven metropolitan papers, and ten of these advocated Reform, partly perhaps from interested motives. They suffered from disabilities almost as severely as the Catholics had suffered. The paper was heavily taxed; the stamp on each copy cost fivepence; the duty on each advertisement was three shillings and sixpence; consequently, the price of a daily paper was sevenpence. The price was prohibitory for the poor, and news were a monopoly of the wealthy. In the towns, as in the country, a journal passed from hand to hand, till it literally tumbled into shreds under the fingers. A single illustration will serve; and there is a picturesque description in Dr Russell's 'Reminiscences of Yarrow' of the state of things in Ettrick Forest, about the be-

ginning of the century. A solitary copy of a newspaper circulated slowly in extensive districts. "It was read, first of all, by James Burnet. It then passed to Philiphaugh, Foulshiels, Lewinshope, Tinnis, the Manse, Whitehope, Sundhope, Bengerburn, Mount Benger, Dryhope, Henderland, and at last reached Mr James Anderson at Syart." Ettrick Forest lay far out of the world; but its scattered inhabitants were comparatively intelligent. In more accessible parts of the country the farmers were far more indifferent to the news they regarded as a luxury beyond their reach. The Reform struggle created a craving and stimulated demand in the centres of thought and commercial activity. It had brought out many new "weeklies" and "dailies," not a few of them doomed to speedy extinction, while some have survived to be Powers in the present day. But they were unanimous in fanning the agitation for relief from oppressive taxation. Politicians already recognised the authority of the press, and felt themselves bound to make friends with it on any terms. After all, it was asking nothing but what was fair and reasonable. So the objectionable duties were reduced or swept away, and an extraordinary *élan* was the inevitable result. Yet at first the progress was relatively gradual. While the new generation

was growing up, the public was being slowly educated to find a fancied luxury a necessary. Even the leading London journals still worked in very leisurely fashion, and the cost of obtaining early intelligence from abroad was enormous. The 'Times,' with an income from advertisements, &c., which even then was immense, stood easily foremost in its enterprise. At critical times, when great events were impending, it had its special couriers at the service of special agents in the chief Continental cities, while steamers on either side of the Channel were kept in readiness with banked-up fires. More than once it succeeded in anticipating the Government. But enterprise of the kind was exceptional. As a rule, information dribbled out very slowly, and had generally originated in rumours or reports. The types were for the most part quietly set up on the day preceding publication; and the editor rather resented belated intelligence, which was edged in anyhow and scarcely commented upon. The country was infinitely behind the metropolis. The most enterprising of the provincial prints seldom appeared more than once or twice in the week, and the second-hand scraps of news of the previous few days were slovenly pieced together with paste and scissors. As for the "editorials," they were wretchedly written, the literary skill

was contemptible, and the grammar indifferent. Fifty years ago the London press may be said to have controlled public opinion ; had its organs pulled together as harmoniously as they are pulling now, no Ministry could have stood against them for a moment. The change in our own time is marvellous, and it is owing to a combination of causes. Education has been spreading, and with the diffusion of education there has been a general awakening to a lively interest in politics. The lowering of the franchise has given the great body of democratic electors a vague but personal concern in the choice and in the conduct of their representatives. They crowd to the great public meetings, which break in with pleasant sensations on the dull routine of their daily lives, and they read reports of the political deliverances of prominent statesmen, or the leaders in which those speeches are cleverly condensed and criticised. In short, the country at large has become the customers and the patrons of the press : penny papers are bought by thousands and tens of thousands every morning, on the railway platforms ; they are read on the knifeboards of the City omnibuses under difficulties, drifting rain, and umbrellas ; they are littered about the compartments of third-class carriages ; they are the solace of the cabmen while waiting for their fares ; they are scattered

through the parlours and the kitchens of remote farmhouses ; they are spelled out in due course in the labourers' cottages by the dim eyes of age and by dimmer intelligences. The "National" journals even circulate freely under the stone-weighted thatch of the Connaught crofters, who decorate their walls of turf with the seditious cartoons of 'United Ireland.' The consequence of this vast increase of circulation is that a successful journal enjoys an enormous income. And as it is perpetually being run hard by its rivals, it can only continue to prosper by sinking revenue in "capital." Proprietors and editors have long recognised the truth that penny wisdom is the worst of folly. They spend lavishly, and welcome immediate loss when they see the way pretty clearly to ultimate gain. Their outlay on simple war-news, when a great war is in course of decision, would sound fabulous to their steady-going predecessors ; but, even were they inclined to economise and hold back, for the life of them they cannot help themselves. For it is literally a question of life. Circulation must be maintained at any cost, if they are not to lose the advertisements which are their life-blood. With any number of pages given for a penny, they must often lose money on each copy they sell ; but the sheets of advertisements bring them home handsomely. They are subsidised by the

pushing modern system which gives the widest possible publicity to each new conception or invention, from a State loan or a railway company to a cake of patent soap. To secure a good advertising connection is their first ambition, in a game where there are magnificent prizes with a depressing number of blanks. It is notorious that one of the most celebrated of the metropolitan dailies, now clearing from its £70,000 to its £90,000 a-year—for we cannot profess to give even an approximate estimate—was picked up by a chance bargain not thirty years ago for a trifle of £500 from the insolvent proprietors. That venture was smoothly launched on the advertisements, which have been steadily multiplying with its ever-increasing circulation by a natural law of arithmetical progression; while younger rivals, which perhaps are as ably edited, have to stand a heart-wearing struggle with adverse fortune: for the possession of ample means gives an enormous “pull,” when early intelligence and brilliant contributors must infallibly be secured by more liberal pay.

The marvellous inventions of modern science are all in favour of the moneyed journals. The men of old time—to borrow a Scriptural phrase—seldom had any special reason to hurry. Their limited issue was distributed in the neighbourhood, like the baker’s bread or the butcher’s meat.

Comparatively few copies were despatched by the early coaches, which had but limited storage in the fore and hind boots with the mass of miscellaneous parcels. Now the railways run their special early mail-trains, with the many parcel-vans of unlimited capacity which keep printers and publishers up to the mark; the 'Times' and the 'Telegraph' are sold at Leeds or Liverpool little later than the local journals, and as soon as any reasonable man cares to buy them. Of course this prompt and methodical production demands a large and highly trained staff, with something approaching to perfection in the printing and folding machinery. In the old time, unless you engaged the special couriers and steamers, the Continental news came naturally in course of post; the sub-editor knew when the foreign letters might be expected, and he might cross his hands and quietly expect them. Except in facilities for picking up gossip or for writing his correspondence leisurely, Philip Firmin, of Thackeray's 'Pall Mall,' when he was acting for that journal in Paris, was no worse off than the representatives of its long-established rivals, who gave solemn entertainments to Ministers and political society. Now the telegraph has changed all that, and no longer can there be a tranquil life either for foreign correspondent or English editor. The correspondent is in close and con-

stant relations with everybody it is worth his while to influence. The paper contracts with the telegraph company for an exclusive service during certain hours; and the correspondent becomes the slave of the remorseless wire. He must fill the maw of the voracious cormorant somehow, and he may cram it, when satisfactory food is wanting, with all manner of insipid and indigestible stuff. Even should he be inclined to take thought for himself and for the long-suffering public, and to shirk—or, in other words, to leave the wire in repose when there is nothing that is worth the sending—he is not his own master. The vapid telegrams may converge upon him from second-rate capitals and distant commercial cities; and he must transmit the bulletins about the Princess Florestan's cough, or the figures of the falling temperature at Smyrna or Odessa. Nothing is more absurd, nowadays, than the use and abuse of the telegraph. It seems scarcely worth while anticipating the posts to dilate on the costume, complexion, and ornaments of a popular actress, when she stars it upon the boards at San Francisco or St Petersburg. But on the other hand, when wild war-rumours are in the air, or when grand events are actually in action, we gain immensely in excitement and information. Then successive editions of the papers have sensational

headings. Then the journals with unlimited credit come inevitably to the front, eclipsing their comparatively impecunious compeers. The good patriots with the welfare of their country at heart; the stock-jobbers who have been staking heavily on doubtful eventualities; the commercial men and manufacturers, the agriculturists and artisans, with their incomes depending upon tranquillity and the tone of the markets,—have reason to be grateful to the science which in any case shortens the suspense.

Thanks to lavish expenditure and admirable management, the best of the contemporary journals are distinguished for their authority and impartiality. Partisans they are, no doubt; but so far as facts go, they have found that frankness and honesty are the best policy. Indeed they can hardly help themselves. Should they decline the explanation of an aggrieved opponent, who asserts that he has been misrepresented, it is sure to find publicity elsewhere, and thus permanent injustice is made practically impossible. Necessarily, as they are always printing news under pressure, they are liable to be betrayed into mistakes, from which they may have precipitately drawn erroneous deductions. But, considering the constant difficulties with which they have to contend, mistakes of the sort are made wonderfully seldom. If the

modern editor is to hold his own, he must be gifted with an instinctive *flair*, and with masterly promptitude of decision. A piece of startling intelligence comes in at the eleventh hour, when the weary brain is longing for the rest of the pillow. He accepts it, or he consigns it to the waste-basket, or he publishes it "with all reserve." The last alternative is easy. It is always safe to print a telegram "under reserve." But it is a different thing altogether when acceptance of the telegram compels him to command the press to be stopped, while he promptly takes a momentous resolution in unforeseen circumstances as to a new and critical line of journalistic policy. The modern editor has the heavy waggon perpetually at his heels; he must hold it back, while it is pressing him downhill, in the multiplicity of his manifold anxieties and commonplace engagements. He carries the burden of the mortal body about with him, and is perhaps exceptionally predisposed to nervous maladies; yet he should always be ready to rise to the occasion when involved in the embarrassments that are ever impending. And when we consider the difficulties with which he is struggling, we are amazed at the successful astuteness with which he generally contrives to come to time.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE OLD AND THE NEW NOVELISTS.

TO say that a novelist "flourished" fifty or sixty years ago, was no mere figure of speech, for that was comparatively, and from a pecuniary point of view, the golden age of fiction. The course was far from overerowed; favourites came easily to the front; and a man with even respectable gifts for the vocation was safe to become something of a celebrity. No doubt it was a golden time in another respect, inasmuch as there chanced to be a constellation of talents set with stars of the first and the second magnitude. Dickens and Lever had started almost simultaneously, Mr Pickwick going off in his shorts and gaiters in 1836, and having the start of 'Harry Lorrequer' by about three years. Ten years previously Disraeli and Bulwer had presented themselves respectively with the autobiography of the precocious 'Vivian Grey,' and 'Pelham, or the Adventures of a

Gentleman.' Ten years later, Thackeray, after a weary battle with fortune, waged in novelettes repeatedly rejected, and in magazine contributions which brought little fame or money, had his first great triumph in 'Vanity Fair.' Marryat, for many years before, had been making himself a general favourite by his nautical novels. Comparisons are odious, but for original genius in their respective lines, the masters of social comedy and satire have certainly left no living rivals. Now, we can boast neither of a Dickens nor a Thackeray; and it would be perhaps impossible to find among our present novelists a writer of such rare versatility as to run the gamut from a 'Pelham' and a 'Paul Clifford,' through 'Harold' and 'Rienzi,' down to 'My Novel,' 'Kenelm Chillingly,' and 'The Parisians.' But much as we have enjoyed Lever, we might name some dozen of our own contemporaries who could hold their own with him, to say the least of it, in his later and more sober style; there are as many clever practitioners in the sensational school, who would be ashamed of the abrupt transitions and rough workmanship of Harrison Ainsworth, although he did write 'Rockwood' and 'Windsor Castle'; while the respectable G. P. R. James would be nowhere, with his prolix sentimentality and inflated historical romance. The point is

this, that novelists who nowadays would be scrambling in the second class, did a pleasant and profitable business in the olden time. There were obvious and sufficient reasons for that. The old-fashioned novelist with fair capabilities found a free field. A sated public had not grown fastidious and hypercritical; he had only to follow his natural bent, and to write what was amusing or fairly exciting. He had no fear of far-fetched imputations of plagiarism. It was admitted that love-scenes must be mannered and monotonous, yet even the situations of the sighing lovers might be made comparatively fresh. Then the demand for fiction was very considerable, while comparatively few novels came annually into the market. Within a certain range of figures, a novelist of note might readily command his price. The public would assuredly come to his publisher for so many hundreds of copies; flattering reviews assured second or even third editions; and a cheque for £1000 or more was handed over in advance for a 'Heidelberg' or a 'Tower of London.' The quality of the work might be prejudiced by quick production, but the writer's balance at the banker's swelled all the same. Then, although not a few of the best novels appeared in 'Maga' or 'Regina,' there was no necessary anxiety as to the preliminary of passing them

through a paying periodical. Then there was no middleman, in the shape of the director of the circulating library, to set capricious limits to the probable demand by a practical monopoly of patronage. Then, a Dickens, a Thackeray, or even a Lever would issue his own works in separate shilling serials; and results he would have regarded as a depressing failure would seem a fabulous success at the present time. After those palmy days came the middle period. Competitors had been multiplying, but there were still good profits to be made, though even established favourites found their circulation falling away, and writers of genius were beginning to grumble. The libraries had been killing private sales; but, on the other hand, rich and enterprising magazines were opening new sources of profit. The 'Cornhill' had given £7000 for 'Romola,' and much the same money, we believe, for Wilkie Collins's 'Armada'; and the 'Cornhill' had rivals running it hard. The chance of drawing such prizes in the literary lottery was enough to stimulate ambition and cupidity. Charlotte Brontë, who had been nursing her genius in the Westmoreland wilds, came up to town one morning to fancy herself wealthy and find herself famous. George Eliot had left metaphysical and religious speculation, to reproduce those inimitable studies of character, and those

scenes of rural life, which were really the reminiscences of a happier girlhood. Mrs Oliphant, who had begun by photographing the old Scottish manners, had launched out in broader fields, and the rare versatility of her art had captivated the popular fancy. As for Anthony Trollope, he was at least as prolific and as popular; and marvellous is the average quality of his workmanship, considering the severe mechanical conditions under which he systematically carried it on. It is hardly conceivable that the author of 'The Last Chronicles of Basset' could have thrown it off with all the precision of machinery, at the invariable pace of so many pages of manuscript per morning. Mrs Oliphant and Trollope had brought out their maiden works just a year or two before the middle of the century. Whyte Melville, who was a few years their junior as an author, had characteristically taken a line of his own across country. His sporting and society novels had a tremendous run from the first, in mess-rooms, in drawing-rooms, and with men of the world. It may be remarked in passing, that it was a misfortune for his fame that he was encouraged to stick to that special line of his, and seldom to swerve from it. His 'Interpreter,' and still more his 'Gladiators,' show what he might have done had he plumed his pinions for loftier flights. There

is no need to multiply references to other writers of even greater originality, and with a stronger backbone, than either Trollope or Melville, such as Charles Reade. The author of 'Christie Johnstone' and 'The Cloister and the Hearth' insisted on damaging his chances by writing novels with an earnest purpose. All the novelists who have been named may be credited with genius, or something that might easily pass current for it. Undoubtedly they were inspired by a passion for their art, and so they were generally more disinterested than novelists of inferior capacity. But it is certain that their genius was stimulated by the smoothness of their career, when they had succeeded in scoring their first successes. They might calculate their incomes like any solicitor or shopkeeper. Within a trifle, they knew the prices at which their books would sell, and they could afford to take life and labour leisurely, if they dared but reckon like Trollope on so many daily revolutions of the intellectual machinery.

For as nineteen novelists out of twenty write for a livelihood or for luxuries—"not to put too fine a point upon it"—pay is the pivot on which the novel-market must turn. And now the novel-market is not only affected, like all others, by the prevailing depression, but the pay is become excessively precarious and speculative.

The circulating libraries, if they have not been compelled to retrench, at all events distribute their patronage among a host of claimants which is constantly increasing. Many of the multiplying serials have been falling into difficulties, and driving harder bargains than they used to do. While Parisian novels pass into their 80th edition, second editions in England are become extremely rare, as a third is phenomenal and a fourth miraculous. We know that before Mr Trollope died, he had to resign himself to serious reductions in the quotations for his produce. We suspect that Mrs Oliphant, who is happily with us still, could tell a very similar story. The gift of great fertility, even from the pecuniary point of view, is nowadays by no means an unmixed benefit, since the demand from the serials comes short of the supply. Slower workmanship might, in some cases, produce superior quality; but if you have to pay your bills and keep up your establishment on the habitual scale, superior but ill-remunerated labour is unsatisfactory. At present we may take it for granted that the highest pay is something less than half what it was twenty years ago; while with second-class writers, it is simply a toss-up whether they are decently or most inadequately remunerated. Mr William Black has for many years been among the foremost, if

not the first, of our novelists. It is understood that Mr Black's price for a book—and he can count on a great transatlantic circulation—is £3000; while, as we have seen, the 'Cornhill' could once afford to pay twice as much for a novel by Mr Wilkie Collins. No one nowadays stands above Mr Besant. We doubt if Mr Besant does better than, or as well as, Mr Black. And we know that one of the most popular of our novelists congratulated himself cordially three years ago, on the first of his innumerable and entertaining books which had sold for a sum going into the four figures. Anglo-American novelists like Mr Henry James or Mr Marion Crawford are fortunate. Thanks to the laws of English copyright and a double nationality, they can sell their fictions on fair terms on either side of the Atlantic.

The fact is, we have good men in plenty at present, and good women as well. But the crush of competition, and the corresponding fall in prices, inevitably tend to depreciate quality. The few who are singled out from the ruck by serious labour rather than casual *succès d'estime* can afford, and indeed are encouraged, to have regard for their reputations. We know no more thoroughly conscientious novels than those of Mr Besant; nor does Mr Black seem to spare himself trouble, although his favourite subjects

involve less labour. Mr Payn is distinguished by an inexhaustible ingenuity of plot, and still more by the perennial freshness of worldly knowledge and ready recollections with which he enlivens his pages and brightens his dialogues. The authors of 'Lorna Doone' and 'Far from the Madding Crowd,' though they can never surpass, or even equal, their own memorable masterpieces, have always steeped themselves in the spirit and the scenes of the districts they chose for their subjects. Even Mr Meredith, who has always held popularity in contempt, and striven after an ideal standard of thought and sparkle, is having tardy justice done his genius at last, which is greatly to the credit of the rising generation. The latest edition of his collected novels is said to have been selling exceedingly well. But passing on from the older and more widely known novelists, we see signs everywhere, and even in genuine though ephemeral successes, of the fierce struggle for livelihood and fame. Mr Anstey takes the reading world by storm in his 'Vice Versa,' and forthwith he has to struggle desperately with his own reputation for humour. 'The Giant's Robe' and 'The Tinted Venus' are severely judged by the standard he has himself set up. Mr Rider Haggard makes a hit with his 'Solomon's Mines,' and when he

follows up the sensational triumph with a 'She' and 'Jess,' a pack of envious detractors opens full cry upon "the plagiarist." Mr Haggard must have firm nerves if they are not shaken when he is devising the plots of his coming romances; and he may hesitate in setting down an "and" or a "but," in the apprehension that some previous romancist may have anticipated him there. In short, the profession of the novelist is steadily becoming less lucrative and more ungrateful. He finds increasing difficulties in the way of "placing" his work, so as to bring him in a reasonable profit; diabolically ingenious critics are down upon him with plausible charges; a chance may throw him out with the circulating libraries, which practically dictate terms to competing publishers; and a single failure, although it may be comparative, may turn into a catastrophe to check his advance.

In fact, assured success is so difficult that the leading novelists of the day might well have their brains turned. They may hold a secondary position in public estimation to great statesmen and generals and the most distinguished men of science, but they have the comfort of serene satisfaction and self-assurance. In the realms of the fancy they have forced their way to the front, through a jostling crowd of competitors,

and in the face of difficulties and disappointments. Nearly everybody writes novels nowadays. In other words, anybody who has nothing particular to do, and has a fatal facility for fluent commonplaces, insists upon trying his luck in the novel-market. So long as they can pay something to a pushing publisher, aspirants can always put in for the lottery of profit and publicity. Any man, matron, or maiden may honestly try and honourably fail: the pity is, when they are encouraged to persevere by charitable silence or kindly meant falsehoods. But the curse and incubus of the novel-market is facile mediocrity. How many pretentious love-stories are published annually, showing neither the slightest acquaintance with actual life nor any instinct for the appreciation of unfamiliar human nature. With all respect for the fair sex, one is bound to say that women are the worst offenders. The man of energy who finds himself unpleasantly hard up, as a rule seeks an income from some active occupation. But the impecunious lady sees few possible or profitable openings. She shrinks from being a governess or companion, and small blame to her. Very probably she is but indifferently qualified for even teaching children in the nursery. As it is evident that any one can write a novel, she tries her hand; and should she have the luck to clear

her expenses, she is not easily discouraged. With rare confidence and irrepressible persistency, she makes interest in all quarters for favourable notices. Very possibly she obtains them, especially if she have "connections" or be in society; so she establishes a certain hold on the publishers. The books may be pure, but they are commonplace. She can only describe what she knows or has seen: when she goes any further, imagination plays her false. The only realistic pictures are those that reproduce what is within the range of her narrow experience—dances, and dinners, and flirtations at lawn-tennis. The attractively bound volumes are sold cheap, and they serve for circulation as well as any other. But the sums that are paid for them must be deducted from the fund which remunerates novelists of all orders of merit. In short, considering all the circumstances and the drawbacks, we can only be surprised that we have still so many novels of admirable quality.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE 'TIMES' OF FIFTY YEARS AGO.

THE reflection of the day is to be found in the daily journal, and by way of contrasting the present with the past, it is curious to turn to the 'Times' of fifty years ago. As matters of all kind are mixed up promiscuously, the notes from the files must necessarily be a medley. And if we are surprised by contrasts with the present, we are struck by strange similarities. Take home-history first, as the most important of subjects. Many of the comments on the condition of Ireland might very well have been written to-day, although now we are inclined to fancy with considerable reason that our relations with Ireland were never more critical. In the 'Times' of January 13, 1836, we are informed, "Matters have now arrived at such a pitch in Ireland, that there must be some formal and immediate decision promulgated by the supreme authority of the State on this brief and

pithy question—viz., whether it is the bounden duty of the magistrates to protect the king's subjects who abide by the law, or the king's enemies, who deliberately, systematically, and *vi et armis* resist it." January 20: "Our private letters intimate what is going on throughout Ireland, that pleasure-ground of Mr Daniel O'Connell, where outrage, robbery, persecution, and murder may, it appears, be carried on to any extent, without at all 'impairing the happy tranquillity' which has been the hourly boast of the Melbourne and Mulgrave Administration." It appears from the words satirically quoted in the inverted commas, that then, as now, an English political party insisted on crying peace when there was no peace. Then, the National Association was playing the part of the Land and National Leagues. But then the agitation of that National Association was directed against the Protestant clergy in place of the landlords, and the conspiracy was against tithes instead of rent. That Association had enlisted all the powers of lawlessness in its service, for the Duke of Wellington said, in his speech on the address of 1836, "that no clergyman could claim his dues without the certainty almost of being murdered." Then, O'Connell was giving cordial support to the Whigs, as Mr Parnell and his staunch Parliamentary following are now supporting Mr

Gladstone and the Radicals. Then, in the Irish debates in both Houses of Parliament, Fox and Burke were quoted as freely, as tediously, and as irrelevantly as at present. Then, as now, the bulk of the English representatives leant to the Tories; but we read that that Tory superiority "was more than counterbalanced by the Liberal strength in Scotland and Ireland." Then, the Liberal party was largely supported by the northern manufacturing towns and the Dissenting interest. Then, the representatives of the Irish "patriots," whatever their grievances, could not complain of being denied all liberty of speech in the hostile British press. The 'Times' might be hard upon O'Connell, but nevertheless, in its comparatively limited space, it printed epistles and manifestoes from Derrynane Abbey, some of which run to three columns in length.

Its own remarks upon current events are relatively brief. There is often only one leader; there is seldom more than two: though these are generally supplemented by one or two "leaderettes." But in those days there was little information from foreign parts, and little interest in foreign politics. As for our colonies at the antipodes, they were mere scattered Government settlements, and there could seldom be anything to say about them. The news from the Pacific coast of Southern America were so stale, that it

seemed hardly worth while printing them. For example, the letters from Valparaiso are dated four and a half months previous to publication. Yet, although there were few foreign correspondents, and no monopoly of an electric wire, the expenses of the 'Times' for Continental, and notably for Parisian "Expresses," must have been enormous. For the leading journal grudged nothing to anticipate or to outstrip competition, and although the Continental machinery might be working at low pressure for months, it was always in readiness to drive ahead in an emergency. But the best pace was slow. It was evidently considered a highly creditable feat, when intelligence of "an unparalleled conflagration" in New York came to Printing-House Square in twenty days. The notices of colonial affairs were rare and scanty. It is clear that the governors were intrusted with a large discretion, and it was tolerably safe to charge them with abusing it. There are many letters attacking those British satraps, containing charges that could only be met or disposed of with the slow return of the mails. At home, the combinations of workmen were already becoming formidable, and exciting great uneasiness among capitalists. In October 1833 we read that "the system of unions has spread widely, and is working to the serious injury of men and masters. It keeps capitalists

uncertain." It had led at Leeds to a counter-combination of the masters. A prophetic leader-writer remarks, in denouncing the unionists, that "their monstrous tyranny is not to be endured, and must work its own ruin." In the agricultural districts there were already bitter complaints against the intolerable burden of the poor-rates. It is startling to hear that in the little rural parish of Lindfield, in Sussex, £500 out of the rates had been spent in a single year upon able-bodied men. The explanation was—and we have similar statements often repeated from other districts—that farmers who had been seduced into paying rack-rents did their utmost to depress wages by keeping an excessive supply of labour. We have many examples of how labourers were at the mercy of the masters, although English serfs were understood to have been enfranchised. In October 1836, four men were tried and convicted by a bench of Norfolk justices for "inducing a strike" among farm hands. In other words, they had persuaded a single man to leave his work, so that the punishment did not err on the side of lenity. Three of the criminals were sentenced to eighteen months with hard labour. The fourth was let off lightly with twelve months, "on account of previous good character." But convicts of any age or of either sex were by no means too

tenderly dealt with. The shipwreck of a vessel bound to Botany Bay or some other penal settlement at the antipodes elicited curious disclosures. Among similar cases, there was a girl of twelve transported for stealing a mother-o'-pearl card-counter; as a girl of thirteen had been condemned for picking up a pocket-handkerchief in the street. They had been locked up of nights, and even forced to sleep, with "hardened Scotch desperadoes."

There are more harrowing though not more scandalous revelations as to the sufferings of kidnapped unfortunates sent involuntarily to sea. In spite of treaties and legislation, perhaps because of our swift cruisers and flying squadrons, the slave-trade had lost none of its horrors. The 'Times' says as much in so many words. "The slave-trade appears to have lost none of the appalling horrors and revolting cruelties that formerly demoralised it, though the wretches who ply it are of a different caste." The slave-ships were commanded by desperate men; the cargo was always fully insured; and when capture seemed imminent, slaves in their irons were thrown overboard in the dark, to suppress the most damning *pièces de conviction*. Sometimes, in the last resort, there were lighted matches kept in readiness above the open powder-magazine. The hold was putrid and

pestilential in any case. The unfortunate blacks were manacled chin to knee, between decks that were sometimes only three feet high! They breathed the burning air through open hatches, but when a hostile sail was sighted, the hatches were battened down to shut in the foul stench which would have betrayed the business of the slaver. If she succeeded in escaping, ten to twenty per cent of the miserable wretches might have been suffocated. When escape seemed hopeless, we are told that the blacks would be confined and flung overboard in weighted casks; the hold was quickly cleansed, so that when the flag was struck and the ship was boarded, there were only Portuguese or Brazilian seamen to be seen.

There are many remarkable memoranda as to municipal abuses. Stamford, Warwick, Banbury, &c., seem to have been absolutely at the orders of their aristocratic dictators. The Rutland family had for fifty years been the patrons of the University borough of Cambridge; the 100 burgesses out of a population of 21,000 had recently been increased to 148. The political sentiments of the elect were elicited in preliminary examinations, and guaranteed by solemn pledges. The dignity of mayor was hereditary in certain obsequious families; in thirty-three years, three names appear in something like rotation. When

there was any apprehension of mutiny, scores of outlying voters were brought to the polls in carriages from Belvoir and Cheveley. There was monthly feasting for the voters and their friends; no questions were asked and no bills were sent in. The borough funds and property were alienated so openly, that it could scarcely be termed embezzlement. Lands were leased at nominal rentals to corporations or their kinsfolk, on 999 years' leases. There were sales which were virtually free gifts. Charities were devoted to the private purposes of the corporation, or quietly appropriated and divided by the trustees. Large sums were left unaccounted for, when embarrassing inquiries were instituted and balance-sheets ordered. Nor was it only in the smaller boroughs that the scandals were flagrant. Liverpool, which had grown to a population of 200,000, was still governed on a charter which had been granted to a petty town of 6000 inhabitants. The oligarchical Corporation, administering a revenue of £300,000, bestowed sinecures freely, with salaries from £5000 downwards, on its own members and their friends and clients.

In Church proceedings, as in actions brought in the courts, we come at facts as to the disabilities of Dissenters. They are worried over their baptisms, their marriages, and their burials. If not

christened in the parish church, there could be no entry in the parish register; and, whether they were united by their own ministers or not, they must be married, besides, according to the Church of England ritual. The burdens on certain classes of traders and of consumers were equally oppressive, if less irritating. The timber duties were so heavy, that Baltic timber was shipped to the Canadas, to be brought back as colonial produce. Consequently the cost of the best wood was often almost prohibitory; and houses, furniture, and even ships, were frequently constructed of inferior materials. With regard to one important Government contract, it came out that the lowest bidder had arranged to buy in Norway, and import from Quebec. As for the price of food, we have protests against the bakers, who would insist on keeping the quarter-loaf at ninepence, although wheat had fallen from sixty-five shillings to fifty. Philanthropists were pressing for prison reform. The sheriffs maintained that a prison like Newgate "ought not to be a place of comfort, but a place of terror." Yet still the reformers continue to urge, with some reason, that it would be but decent to separate the men from the women; that the bathing of filthy bodies and the fumigation of filthy clothes were advisable, simply for sanitary reasons; and that accommodation might be provided, so that a

large number of prisoners should not sleep huddled together on the floor.

The latest practical inventions of science seem to have seldom met with much favour. The 'Times' admits the financial success of the Manchester and Liverpool railway, but warns investors against being betrayed into speculative imitation. It goes on to argue the question on public grounds. "Where there are good roads or convenient canals, it would be a mistake to alter existing arrangements." As for the worthy people of Aberystwith, they protested and remonstrated against the introduction of gas, which they seem to have regarded as a dangerous invention of the Evil One. The aeronauts Green and Graham were nightly drawing crowds, as they went up in balloons from Vauxhall Gardens; but then they performed their feats at their own risk. And although the Vauxhall gaieties are repeatedly dilated upon at length, not a quarter of a column is devoted to the meeting of the British Association.

Talking of those balloon ascents leads us to glance over the 'Times' advertising columns. They contained much the same variety of matter as at present. Swift and small teak-built ships are advertised, for India, Canada, and the antipodes, in place of the great ocean-steamers. George Robins engrosses a lion's share of the columns,

with his richly-coloured paintings of terrestrial paradises; and, in fact, he seems to have had a monopoly of fashionable land and house agencies. Among the literary announcements, which are short and select, we find Mr Bulwer's 'Rienzi,' Captain Marryat's 'Japhet in Search of a Father,' and Mrs Trollope's 'Paris and the Parisians.' Disraeli's 'Letters from Runnymede' were then running through the paper; and on September 15, 1836, on the reduction of the stamp-duty, it probably largely increased its circulation, when it lowered its price from sevenpence to fivepence.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE OLD SEAMEN AND THE NEW.

THERE is no more exciting reading than the old sea-novel. It was full of heroic adventure, it told tales of almost superhuman endurance, and it was strictly founded upon facts. Indeed, fiction would have found it difficult to improve upon realities, and the truth was at least as strange as any credible flights of the fancy. Marryat and Michael Scott were the favourite authors of fifty years ago; but, for the most part, they celebrated the feats of the Royal Navy and of men who made fighting their regular trade. We are indebted to the research of Mr Clark Russell, an unrivalled authority on naval subjects, for more surprising examples of the gallantry of our merchant seamen. He tells us, for instance, of the fight of the Cumberland in the Channel with four heavily armed French privateers. The English ship was homeward bound and crippled, under

jury-rig. She had a crew of only twenty-six men, and the French luggers carried two hundred and seventy. Repeatedly boarded, she as often repulsed her assailants, and her captain brought her, with sundry prisoners, safe into the Downs. We doubt if there be a more gallant action on record, though the chronicler quietly remarks that it "was supposed" to be unparalleled in the merchant service. It was men of the Cumberland type who manned our fleets in the beginning of her Majesty's reign. They had seen comparatively little fighting, but the habits and traditions of the fighting times still survived; they went to sea in the same class of ships; they were subjected to the same discipline; steam had introduced no sensible modifications, and the aggregate tonnage of our sailing craft was still steadily increasing. Those ancient mariners were wonderful men, and a credit to the country that took indifferent care of them. In the glorious days of the long war, they were recruited for the service by the bludgeons and cutlasses of the press-gangs. Bruised and bleeding, they were carried on board in handcuffs, and in a few days they were in friendly fellowship with the very men who had captured and mauled them. When they shipped for commercial cruises they were never safe; nor did they know where they might be

slinging their hammock the next night. The homeward-bound merchantman in the chops of the Channel might be boarded by the man-o'-war boat armed with irresistible authority; the crew was mustered, a selection was made, and the sea-worn mariner, who had been counting the hours till he clasped his wife or his sweetheart in his arms, was summarily entered on the books of a vessel that might be under orders for the antipodes. Perhaps he consoled himself in a depressing situation with the proverbial carelessness of the Jack-tar. Possibly he resigned himself to the irreparable with the fatalism of the Moslem, and comforted himself with the commonplace maxim that "least said was soonest mended." Probably he was drawn to his new comrades by common grievances and sufferings, for the actual life at sea in those days was a very different thing from its representations on the British stage. The imaginations of patriotic dramatists ran traditional riot in creating striking situations for actors like Mr T. P. Cooke, who brought down the galleries and recruited for the forecastles. The stage seaman, in loose necktie and flowing pantaloons, was the type of joyous freedom and heroic courage. His veritable prototype was plucky enough; but beneath the flag that braved the battle and the breeze he could not call his soul

his own with any assurance. So long as he did his duty like a man, he might keep his self-respect under a kindly captain. But, when the captain was a tartar, the ship was a hell. There were parasites among the officers and warrant officers to pander to the passions and caprices of the tyrant. On the faintest pretext, on a false accusation, or for no reason at all, Jack might be seized up to the gratings and get any number of dozens from the boatswain's mate. Nothing is more significant of the state of the navy in those days than the fact that, although the cat tore skin and flesh, it seldom lacerated the feelings. A decent seaman might feel the degradation, but generally the men took their floggings in a matter-of-fact way, like so many schoolboys. There was no appeal, for any practical purpose, from a captain commanding at the other side of the world; and the most reckless injustice was only tempered by apprehensions of possible mutiny. Yet there is hardly an example of even a mutinous and insubordinate crew refusing to fight in the presence of the enemy. It used to be said that an Englishman could only show himself at his best on a full stomach; but the whole of our naval history seems to contradict that. The victualling was simply infamous. The salt junk and pork were innutritious at the best;

but the sea-stores were too often shipped by corrupt contractors, as the seamen were swindled by rascally pursers. The junk would be almost as impracticable as hippopotamus-leather; the fat pork would have turned rancid; the flinty biscuits would be swarming with much the same species of boring-worm that works its way under copper sheathing through teak timber. Mr Clark Russell puts forward the ingenious theory that there is something nutritive as well as stimulating in the sea air; so that, in fact, the mariners may have trained for fighting on the grog and the sea-breezes. It may have been so, but it is certain that in prolonged cruises they were sure to suffer horribly. The scurvy, produced by the long use of salted food, found an easy prey in bodies lowered by semi-starvation; and, when the epidemic fairly set in, the ship of a sudden would be changed into a floating hospital. There is nothing more dramatically ghastly in "The Ancient Mariner" than the vision we can conjure up of toothless victims tottering about the decks, and of the cumbrous canvas laboriously furled by stricken skeletons painfully clinging to the yards.

Since then matters have much improved in many ways. Now, in the navy at least, no sailor can be tyrannically treated; or, if he be, he knows that he can obtain redress. His officers

have the terrors of court-martial before their eyes, of public opinion, of parliamentary busybodies and philanthropists; and of the omnipresent writers of letters to the press. The sailor is well and liberally fed, though his grog has been stopped and "cat-lap" has been substituted. He enters her Majesty's service of his own free will; he has fair pay; he has facilities afforded him for saving it; and he has the prospect of a pension if he serves long enough, or of a retreat in the reserves. But notwithstanding the organisation of "naval reserves," although a large proportion of the population of the islands must always take to the sea as fishermen, pilots, &c., or in coasting craft, seamen shipping for long voyages are steadily becoming scarcer. If we were involved in a protracted war, it would be difficult to keep the navy up to its fighting strength; nor would it be easy to man effectively on the spur of the moment those great packets of the private companies which the Admiralty proposes to turn into swift cruisers.

The navy used, directly or indirectly, to be recruited mainly from the mercantile marine. In the old days the merchant service would seem to have been overmanned, making all allowances for everything being done by muscles instead of steam. The crew of one of the great East Indiamen would muster some hundred

hands. Now, as Mr Clark Russell tells us, a far bigger full-rigged ship will go to sea with twenty or five-and-twenty men. We learn from the statistics of the Board of Trade that so lately as in 1854 there was an average of 4.17 hands to each 100 tons of shipping. In 1885 the average had fallen to 2.77 for steamers, to 2.74 for sailing vessels. That is partly due, no doubt, to mechanism having superseded men; but we fear it is still more to be attributed to falling rates with fierce competition. And it is clear that in that swiftly growing diminution there is a new element of danger. A minimum of able seamen may suffice to handle the ship when all is going smoothly. But should some of them be invalided or lost, or if they are worn out by wild weather and long watches, the ship and all on board must evidently be in extreme peril. Notwithstanding that our ships are now habitually undermanned, the aggregate number of seamen in British employment must be much greater than it was fifty or even thirty years ago. The exports and imports carried in English bottoms are at least six times what they were in 1836. But the native seaman who fought at Trafalgar and the Nile has been found to be a costly and troublesome article; a startling proportion of the crews of merchantmen and passenger steamers are foreigners, and that proportion

is increasing annually. Mr Clark Russell quotes a speech made at Sunderland, which probably exaggerated—round numbers in platform oratory are always suspicious—although, apparently, it was never contradicted. It asserted that, of over 210,000 merchant-seamen, not more than a tenth were British subjects. It is certain, at least, that shipowners have been discovering in these days of depression and competition that Germans and Scandinavians are content with smaller wages and worse food than will satisfy Englishmen, and that they will stand much more bullying without turning restive.

As the demand for native seamen slackens, the supply must diminish proportionately. We are told that the chief objection of good and intelligent men to the calling is the difficulty of making sure of a satisfactory berth. Paid off from one ship, they may suffer privations, and run the gauntlet of all manner of temptations, before they find another engagement. Of course, nothing can be more depressing to a steady and energetic man than the doubt as to obtaining regular employment; but otherwise, the lot of the modern mariner is much improved. He is no longer at the mercy of irresponsible masters. Elaborate Shipping Acts have been passed for his protection; cheap and simple machinery is provided, by which he may assert his rights. In

each important harbour, if he can set foot ashore, he finds a friend in the consul or the consular agent. The great steam-companies generally feed him exceedingly well; and in other ships, although Government inspection of the stores must necessarily be very much of a farce, nevertheless, at the worst he can be no worse off than he used to be. The seas and coasts, on the whole, are admirably lighted; and when ships do come to grief off our shores in a gale or in fogs, the salvage tugs are looking out for the signals of distress, and there are lifeboats in readiness to be launched through the breakers. With steam-vessels multiplying more and more on the regular water-ways, the most serious and least preventible peril comes from collisions; and collisions, it is to be feared, will always be frequent, however precise may be the "rules of the road."

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONTRASTS IN IRELAND.

IRELAND is essentially a country of contrasts, as the character of the people is full of contradictions. The difficulty in either understanding or dealing with it is, that it is absolutely impossible to generalise, and consequently to come to definite or comprehensive conclusions. The material and social conditions of one county may be absolutely different from those in the counties adjoining; nay, even parishes and townlands are sharply divided by signs that are conspicuous to the most careless observer. One parish may be poverty-stricken; the ragged people have the sullen aspect of hopeless debtors; they are several terms behindhand with impossible rents; the starving beasts are trying to get a mouthful of grass by the roadsides, or tugging at the rotten thatch of the wretched cabins. You cross a stream or go through the "Gap" in a dividing range of low hills, to find yourself suddenly in

all the evidences of comfort. There are substantial steadings and well-fenced fields; there is good store of stacks in the rickyards; flocks of fat geese are waddling about in the drainage from valuable manure-heaps; the fertilisers have been spread freely over the kindly land; sleek and tolerably well-bred beasts are grazing in the meadows. Nowadays, Irish prosperity must be very much a matter of soil and climate, though perhaps still more of temperament, blood, and tradition. The landlord's hands are tied, and the tenant is left to himself. If the landlord has now no inducement to help, he must be content with the "fair" rent problematically paid,—nor can he ever again put a price on the tenant's improvements. Legislation has left the tenant master of his lot. But then the soil and the climate differ so widely. The climate ranges from that of northern Ulster, with its biting blasts and its chilly sea-fogs, to the warm rain-drip of Kerry and southern Cork, where the maiden-hair fern flourishes in clefts on the sea-shore, where there are half-natural copses of crimson fuchsias, and the hillsides are covered with thickets of the arbutus. As for the soil, you may have the rich grazings in the golden vale of Tipperary, or the well-sheltered winter pasturages among the limestone rocks of Clare; or you may be landed in the very abomination

of desolation among the rocks and bogs of north-western Donegal. As for the influences of race and temperament, there are districts where the farmers have faced difficulties triumphantly; there are districts where men have found things made so smooth for them, that they have lazily let themselves drift; there are districts where they have struggled more or less energetically, with varying success; and there are districts where the small crofters must necessarily have starved, had it not been for help, charity, or foreign labour. Ireland has only too good reason to complain of the manner in which her industries were discouraged. But, after all, her industries must in most cases be somewhat artificial, and it is always by her agriculture that she must live or thrive.

For centuries untold, and from time immemorial, all things seem to have conspired to impoverish the country. Being agricultural, and with no manufactures to speak of, the only capitalists were the landowners. The great landowners, to a man, were either absentees, generally regarding their tenants as sponges to be squeezed, or, if resident on the estates, they squeezed all the same, being madly extravagant and hopelessly in debt. Whether generous or grasping, or one and the other by turns, they were the worst of masters. If they were gener-

ous, they ruined themselves the more quickly; and once ruined, they had no resource but to grind the tenants, either through their agents or the receivers. A people naturally improvident was made more improvident by perpetual distress; and the general state of the country was that of a population living by credit and the universal backing of accommodation bills. The landlord made the most of his land. When he kept the leasing of it in his own hands, he was perpetually grappling with great arrears of debt; and sometimes, after a long period of careless indulgence, he had summarily to sell up his people for what they would fetch. To save himself trouble, or make sure of a certain fixed income, he generally preferred to farm out the property to middlemen. The middlemen proceeded to sublet at greatly increased advances, and the subtenants again subdivided their small holdings among the married sons, who kennelled themselves in miserable mud hovels. For the most amiable virtues of the Irish race have always conspired to aggravate their misery. Though the Irish love a fair, a frolic, and a free fight, as a London gentleman goes out to his club and his rubber, they are nevertheless essentially domestic. They marry young, and they multiply marvellously, for the potato and the "yellow male" are the emblems of fertility.

Some of the most poverty-stricken islanders of the archipelagoes of Mayo and Galway, for example, are for the most part parents before they are twenty, and count hopefully on having a new baby in the cradle every year. Then they have an intense affection for their native soil, and a fond attachment to the old familiar associations, so that nothing short of stern necessity could have encouraged the American emigration. Before that actual necessity arose, and before emigration on an extensive scale had been made possible by establishing cheap steamers, they swarmed like the rabbits in the sandhills in the warrens where they had been bred. And as the rabbits burrow for choice in arid sand or hungry gravel, so the poor Irish multiplied the most in the localities where it was most difficult to find a maintenance. The reason was obvious. They were left free to squat and increase upon land which no one thought it worth while to dispute; while the more fertile farms were eagerly secured by men with money who would now be denounced as land-grabbers. The natural tendency to that multiplication of paupers was bad enough, but political and selfish considerations came in to aggravate it. When there was a native Parliament, each man of many acres was always on the outlook for a profitable political job. The landlords went smelling round

the Castle and the Treasury chests, like mice round toasted cheese. The closest of friends, or at least the nearest of neighbours, were always intriguing against each other for place, pay, pensions, patronage, and bribes handed over underhand in hard cash. Their first idea was to increase their political influence by multiplying the miserable forty-shilling freeholders, who were driven like sheep to the polls. They encouraged infinitesimal division, and winked at the settlement of the hordes of pauper-squatters who ranked on the estate-books for illusory rents. Not a few of them paid a heavy penalty, suffering in common with tenants who were sold up or sent away, when their mortgagees purchased in the Encumbered Estates' Court, and Ireland was half whitewashed by Commissions in bankruptcy.

The old relations of those tenants to their tyrants were remarkable. For tyrants the landlords too often were, although very frequently they were tyrannical in spite of themselves. Hard ground themselves, they had to grind their dependants. But the dependants, with their quick intelligence and lively sense of sympathy, seemed to understand all about it. Harassed themselves by the middleman, the land-bailiff, and the tithe-factor, they could feel for the landlord "on his keeping," who dared never go abroad on a week-day unless he were well mounted, and

under the protection of an armed body-guard. At a nod or without it, they would have torn an intrusive process-server to pieces; and we are told by Carleton that at one time the tariff for serving a writ in especially dangerous districts was as high as £500, or sometimes £1000. The tenant was groaning under griefs and wrongs, for which the prodigal landlords were at least primarily or partially responsible. But then, unworked upon by transatlantic emissaries, he showed kindly consideration, as he had an innate reverence for the representative of an "ould family." He had felt personal pride in the wasteful hospitality of the "big house," with the hogs-heads of claret perpetually on tap, and the fires blazing night and day in the kitchen. He felt sincere compassion for "the master," brought down like himself to humble pooten, and forced to close his hospitable doors against hard-drinking company. So long as a landlord could drink deep and shoot straight; so long as he could sit his horse over any stone wall, or "rowl his man over with a pistol," he was pretty sure of the regard of his harum-scarum dependants.

Yet it must be remembered that in the seething of agricultural discontent, and in the social troubles that were being generated by continuous overcrowding, it was only popular landlords who were exceptionally favoured by immunity from

personal risks. There was always a darker side to the delusive picture. Life had always been held cheap in a country where bludgeon-play was the best fun in the fairs, and the bulk of the people had little to live for. Land-agents had to be on the outlook for murderous ambushes; bailiffs were servilely saluted and shot down from behind hedges; secret associations affiliated members everywhere, and issued summary sentences which were obsequiously carried out. Nothing is more striking in the rollicking writings of the Irish novelists, than the dramatic power with which they love to dwell on the darker aspects of Irish society. William Carleton was a native historian, peasant-born and peasant-bred. All his sympathies were with the class from which he sprang, and he dilates on the virtues of the humble Irish with equal truth and pathos. Yet no one has painted with more force than Carleton the black deeds into which even the better disposed of them were liable to be betrayed. Some of his humble heroes are guilty of the foulest atrocities, though doubtless, if the culprits had been sent before a French jury, they would have been acquitted with extenuating circumstances. We see the son of a decent and substantial farmer, ordered out on a mission of moonlight murder, drowning his scruples in the spirit-bottle, and waking from

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his heavy sleep next noon to wash the blood and powder from his hands, and make warm-hearted love to the girl of his affections. Then, as now, the cruel tyranny of criminal combination made criminals of men who were naturally well-disposed and law-abiding. Then, as now, they excused themselves and were excused by the sense of hereditary wrongs to be settled on the score of the nation. And then, as now, tolerance was too often extended to them by men who admitted those extenuating circumstances, although by their profession they should have been the pillars of law and religion. We remember, for instance, the trial-scene in Lever's 'Jack Hinton,' where Curran is overcome by his sympathy for the man he has been defending for murder; and that still more pathetic scene, where the worthy Father Tom says the funeral service over the mountain-grave of the slain assassin. We have been doing our best all through her Majesty's reign to redress the wrongs with which the Irish reproach us; in many cases, in our passionate anxiety to atone for the past, we have confounded justice to the many with injustice to the once privileged classes; and yet we may be sure that after all our well-meant legislation, the feeling of agricultural and Catholic Ireland is precisely what it was some fifty years ago. Indeed, in one

important respect it has undoubtedly changed for the worse. Fifty years ago the Catholic hierarchy was well inclined to the cause of law and order. It denounced secret oaths and the secret societies, it discouraged illegal combinations like the National Association. The parochial priests, like the Rev. Tom Loftus, were in many instances educated divines of the old school: they had been bred at Douai or St Omer, and had learned to dread the dangers of French democratic opinions. At the same time, with their native versatility they could make themselves all things to all men; they had gentlemanly and even polished manners for good company, and they exercised wonderful authority over their parishioners. The Catholic priest was a welcome guest at the table of the Protestant peer or squire. The priest was the life and soul of the festal meetings at the farmer's, when there was a marriage, a christening, or a "pattern." He was the comforter and counsellor of the cabin, and the confessor of the outlaw. He had a free pass to the hills and the hedgerows, where bands of ruffians with blackened faces were on the prowl; and his sanctity and the authority of his position were so great, that he could ply his horsewhip freely on the shoulders of the bullies of the neighbourhood. The old order of Irish clergy would have been

gladly subsidised by State pay, which would have kept them independent of the seditious politics and agrarian agitations of their parishioners. We neglected the opportunity of securing them ; and their successors, from the archbishops downwards, being independent of the British Government, are become the enemies of the British connection, or at the best, and very exceptionally, its lukewarm friends. No longer the supreme masters of their flocks, they must dance to the popular tunes that are piped by the people who pay them. If "his Riverence" is to get his dues, he must not go against the movement for "prairie rents" which is set afoot and subsidised by the American Irish. And while his pecuniary interests sway him irresistibly to the popular side, now his sympathies go naturally in the same direction. The new generation of priests is sprung almost entirely from the small farmers and the provincial tradesmen. It has endured their griefs, it has adopted their class-hatreds, and has sucked in their prejudices with its mother's milk. It takes the chair at the National meetings ; it addresses oratorical rhapsodies with practised volubility to inflammable audiences ; it would level all secular accumulations of property down to the low-water mark ; it sets its face against the Union and against Imperial ascendancy ; and it throws the sacred

vestments of the Church over questionable causes and criminal projects. In short, we have to reckon with a new and formidable power that might once have been easily engaged to befriend us, and thereby our relations to Ireland have become very seriously and permanently complicated.

CHAPTER XXV.

CHANGES IN IRELAND.

THERE have been many changes in Ireland in the last fifty years, but surely none so great as in the national temperament. The Irishman of fifty years ago was invariably described by travellers, tourists, memoir writers, and novelists, as the soul of fun and frolic. Though his rags might be skewered on his body by pins; though his heart might be "clean broke with his sorrows," he was always ready with his jest, and he shone in natural repartee. The stranger and the Saxon was considered fair game, especially if he gave himself airs of superiority; and from Kingston to Killarney, in the castle, the inn, or the cottage, he was perpetually made the victim of extravagant hoaxes. When the natives had no "foreigners" to practise upon, they kept their hands in by playing jests on each other; and the reckless indulgence of their very practical wit ended in

personal encounters with the pistol or the shillelah, which were considered as capping the joke. The humours of Donnybrook Fair were typical of the characteristics of a country which was always on the broad grin. There may have been exaggeration, but there was undoubtedly truth, in these humorous pictures which have been lovingly elaborated by so many patriotic artists. It is as certain that they would give the falsest possible notion of the Irish character of to-day. Now, the Irishman of the lower orders seems scarcely to have a laugh left in him. You may talk to the carmen and the peasantry from Malin Head to Cape Clear, and never find it needful to take out your note-book, should you be touring in search of traits of Hibernian humour. I do not mean to say that you may not sometimes be struck by a quaint or a shrewd saying. But the humour that entertains you is altogether involuntary, and is the chance flash of the brilliant Celtic fancy that is original in its views of life as in its expressions. The spirit of hoaxing still prevails, but it is so sobered down into circumstantial dulness, that it might pass for deliberate mendacity were it not often inspired by civility and the desire to make things pleasant. Ask an Irishman of the lower ranks the simplest question, and he will answer falsely or at random, rather than not answer at all. He has no de-

liberate desire to deceive, but he is anxious to make himself agreeable. If he is driving you through an unknown district, he feels he is bound to do the honours, and gives his imagination free play. He will narrate the story of some outrage, or some fight over an eviction, with such dramatic effect, that you are bound to believe everything except his assertion that he was not an eye-witness ; and that is the origin of many of the wonderful tales which Englishmen bring back with them for English consumption. Though, should you chance to engage the same *raconteur* again, and carry him back to the tale that had affected you so deeply, you catch him out in so many changes and fantastic contradictions, that you can only admire his talent for romance. We used to read of rollicking fun and devilry ; of twinkling eyes in haggard countenances ; of peals of merry laughter from the hangers-on round the hospitable doors of the squire and in the yard of the village hostelry. Now, the whole population has a serious air which is often saturnine, more often sullen. They all look as if they were calculating ways and means,—reckoning the shillings they are owing to the landlord or the shopkeeper, or discounting the prospects of national “indipidence.”

And possibly that may be partly the explanation. For cares come necessarily with increasing

comfort, and there can be no question whatever that the Irishman of to-day is far better off than his father and grandfather. We hear much of sad cases of Irish distress; but we should hear far less were they not comparatively exceptional,—not to speak of the interest men have in over-colouring them. In the olden time Irish destitution was accepted everywhere as a matter of course. Among the peasantry, in three provinces of the “gem of the ocean,” the poverty was nearly universal and extreme. They might have envied the lot of the Russian serf—and the most squalid of the villagers of the Balkans lived luxuriously by comparison. The poorest districts were densely over-populated. Each man had his potato-patch, and perhaps the pig, that lived precariously by foraging, and on the peelings of the “murphies.” Those who were best off had a “cow’s grass,” or grass for a couple of sheep, which probably meant the right of pasture on some stony hillside. There were no fences between the tiny crofts, and quarrels between neighbours and free fights were the necessary consequence. The most peaceable people on the earth might have fought, when it was a question of bare subsistence and keeping body and soul together. Nor did any people in the world live on so unsavoury and monotonous a diet. It was potatoes, potatoes, potatoes—morning, noon,

and night : a mess of stirabout was a luxury for high festivals. The potato is a nutritious vegetable enough, when carefully cultivated and decently cooked. But the Irish potato, grown and saturated in the damp, and generally prematurely gathered, had the waxy consistency of soap, and was almost as tasteless. When the crop was plentiful, and in the early summer, a labourer might stow away a stone at a meal ; so his stomach was chronically swollen, like that of the Kaffir who has gorged his emaciated body on big game. Later in the year, when " the spuds were givin' out," he would pay dearly for his improvidence : in any case, he was always in wretched condition for work. The damp cabin, destitute of furniture and beds, bred disease and fostered epidemics. When the sickness struck down wife or children, he might send leagues across the hills for the parish doctor, who came to them or not as the case might be. The doctor could only prescribe what there was no means of providing, for the sufferer had seldom a shilling laid by to pay for the cheapest medicines or comforts. The sick, with no stamina to support them, were left to the nursing of nature ; and even long-suffering nature could do little for them. All the people were living from hand to mouth ; but happily, perhaps, for their peace of mind, they never realised how precarious was

the tenure of their existence. They went to bed one night, among potato crops apparently flourishing; they rose in the morning, to see the blighted and blackened patches, and to experience the dire extremities of the famine, which, sweeping away the superabundant population, gave the survivors something like breathing-space for a time.

Had they foreseen the calamity, they could hardly have helped themselves. Profoundly ignorant, and generally uneducated, they were wedded to their primitive and barbarous practices. The potatoes were often planted in spongy soil, that was neither drained nor manured. The stunted hill-cattle and shaggy sheep had never changed for the better since the golden age of Brian Boru and the Seven Masters of poetry. The fishermen feared the stormy seas, as they well might, and only put out in their primitive coracles in comparative calms. They left their nets unmended, because they "would not be wanted that day," and when wanted, they excused themselves because the nets were not ready. Indeed, except for the actual feeding of their own families, they had no great inducement to risk their lives, since there was little local sale, and no means of conveyance. In these circumstances, with no outlet for profitable adventure except English harvesting, and other-

wise with never a glimmer of hope, no wonder the Irish peasant was reckless; no wonder he imitated his betters, and drank to keep up his spirits. When glorious in his cups, he was the rollicking Irishman: drink was cheap, and it was the curse of the country. As the squires used to run the claret and cognac from the Garonne that never paid the king a shilling, so the peasants gladdened their hearts with the fiery produce of the hill-stills. In those days the duties of the gauger were no sinecure, and the soldiers and police were continually under orders to protect the still-hunters in their mountain-raids. Of a clear evening, from any commanding height, when none of the night-hawks were known to be abroad, many a thin column of white smoke might be seen curling up from sequestered corners. Those illicit distilleries were guarded while at work by innocent-looking children acting as scouts: the local population might be trusted with the secret,—for it was as much as a man's life was worth to be suspected of turning informer. These stills were so many fountains of factitious happiness, sending their streams of fire-water through all the hovels in the land, and the tap was turned on copiously and cheaply. The capital for starting each was considerable—something like £20. Nevertheless, although the brew was formerly of genuine malt, which was suc-

ceeded by molasses and subsequently by sugar, the drink could be bought at a trifle over six shillings for the gallon. Cheap oblivion in those cheerless days was the one comfort within reach of the Irish paupers.

Yet in saying that, perhaps we do them injustice. There can be no doubt that the Irish peasant was too often a drunken, good-for-little, harum-scarum vagabond, with a rooted objection to anything like hard work. But he was pious in a fashion, and punctiliously attentive to his religious "duties." It was the wish as well as the interest of the priest that his parishioners should be regular in their attendance at divine ordinances. He kept up his authority, which was very frequently used for good, by insisting on their periodical appearances in the confessional. He could not only comfort them in their troubles and preach patience under their trials, but he came to be the confidant of their innermost secrets, and an embarrassing responsibility it must often have been. The penitent was purged by frank avowal and penance, the heavy-laden had their burdens lightened, and the mourners were consoled. Hence the enormous influence exercised by the clergy, so long as the Irish were blindly devout, and before agnostics and revolutionary emissaries from beyond the Atlantic had begun to sap their faith, for political

objects. But, as was only natural with an ignorant and uneducated people, religion degenerated into superstition. Easy absolution encouraged them in the vices which the Church may have denounced but scarcely discouraged. Among all the contradictions in the strange Irish life, none perhaps were stranger or more striking than the scenes of merriment, effusive piety, and savage riot which celebrated the annual pilgrimages to the popular shrines. Poor people submitted to heavy pecuniary sacrifices, they went through privations and infinite toils, that they might get salvation by visiting the sacred shrines on the island in Lough Derg or the summit of Croagh Patrick. There was many a blessed well, besides, more or less accessible where the moral leper might wash and be cleansed. The preparation for these solemn rites was eccentrically characteristic. The devotees, who were too numerous to find shelter under hospitable roofs, would camp out in the open air, or huddle together under the carts that had carried them. Fires were kindled for cooking, correcting the chills, and keeping off the damp ; while the kettles were kept boiling for the brews of strong punch. The beads were told, the Paters and Aves were muttered over in chorus, the steaming tumblers circulated freely, and the gathering would grow uproarious with song and revelry towards the small hours.

Scepticism has been spreading in Ireland, owing to its close connection with free America, yet these pilgrimages and superstitious ceremonies are more popular than ever. Statistics show it. There were more pilgrims to Lough Derg in 1885 than in any previous year; the ferryman who has the monopoly of passing them pays £200 for the privilege, and he had raised his charge from 6d. to 8d. Yet the population of the western counties has been steadily dwindling. In a single month in the same year 7000 pilgrims passed through Westport on their way to Croagh Patrick, and the Protestant ratepayers have to bear their share of the expenses, since the poor-law guardians, against the letter of the law, are compelled by the pressure of Catholic opinion to shelter many of these pious paupers in the workhouse.

À propos to Croagh Patrick and Lough Derg, and as the exception proving the rule, we have a striking proof of the improvement of the condition of the Irish, and of the relief that has been diffused by the much abused poor-law system. Formerly beggars used to swarm in each village, where there was a chance of a traveller changing cars or horses; and in the capital their importunities were a crying scandal and nuisance. Now, except in the neighbourhood of the pilgrims' resorts, where penitents

practise almsgiving as a corollary to other sacraments, a professional beggar is scarcely to be seen. Personally, I have been persecuted by beggars only in the town of Sligo, and on certain steep hills in remote and romantic districts, where the temptations to beset the wayfarer are irresistible; and on these hills the communities of mendicants are dairymen, pig-breeders, and capitalists. The folk who in former days would have swelled the beggar-legions are far better off, independently of poor relief. Where work is to be had, labourers' wages have been rising; and, indeed, the farmers grumble at the improving of the labourers as one of the causes of agrarian distress. There are districts where no remunerative employment is to be obtained, and in these the prevailing distress would have been aggravated by the decline of the British demand for Irish harvesters, since the introduction of agricultural machinery. But, on the one hand, emigration has been relieving congestion; and, on the other, great sums in the aggregate are sent into the poorest households from dutiful children who are doing well in America or Australia. That filial piety which never forgets the old home is one of the finest traits in Irish peasant character. And neighbours who are comparatively well off will help the sufferers next door, and sometimes to lux-

uries as well as necessities. Penurious and profuse, frugal and free-handed, the lower Irish are intensely sympathetic. As they pitied the oppressive landlord, who had drained his cellar to the dregs with his banker's account, so they are ready to indulge even the extravagance which destitution keeps in check. They will give a fair neighbour the money for a bit of finery almost as readily as the food for "a square meal." The proof is, that should you go of a Sunday to a district so notoriously poverty-stricken as Gweedore, you will see all the maids and the matrons flocking to the Mass in gaudy tartan shawls and flaunting head-ribbons. The men are dressed more decently than they used to dress. Rags are rare; the old battered "caubeen" and shattered stove-pipe hat are exploded; wide-awakes and billycocks are all the wear; the small farmers, and even the labourers, are clad in weather-resisting clothes and waterproof frieze; and it is only down in Kerry and south-western Cork that you see the field-hands looking like ragamuffin loafers, in their disreputable "swallow-tails" and dilapidated broadcloth. They are all better fed than formerly, on more varied and nutritious diet. The waxy potato is no longer the only, nor even the primary, article of food. They have got over the old prejudices as to Indian meal, and the fall in

the price of wheat brings bread within reach of the poorer. Bacon is no longer an exceptional extravagance ; and so many of the crofters now have grass for a cow, that milk is comparatively in common use, to the great benefit of the children. The extirpation of the grasping middle-man has been an inexpressible blessing to the lower orders. The squireens—or shoneens, as they were termed locally in the south-west—went after the famine, and a more unprofitable or disreputable class of vicious idlers it would be hard to conceive. They neither reaped nor sowed nor superintended. They rode about on blood screws ; they were the indefatigable patrons of the public-houses, the fairs, and the races ; they made anything or everything an excuse for hard drinking ; and when driven to the wall by long-suffering creditors, they gave another turn to the thumb-screws on their unfortunate dependants. The squireens are gone, with their drunken and dissipated habits, but as great a boon to the people has been the steady spread of temperance. Father Mathew, who set the movement afloat, and manfully stemmed the floods of national debauchery, should have a statue erected to his honour in each market-place in Ireland. The mere conception of his seemingly forlorn venture was heroic, yet the measure of his success was marvellous. His

teaching, and the stimulus he gave to the mission work, has gone a long way towards working a social revolution. We differ from the political opinions of the Irish clergy, as we must often condemn their conduct. But the most bigoted Orangeman does not deny that the majority of them have realised the importance of the temperance movement among a people to whom "the drink" has been a standing snare. They got up temperance gatherings in provincial towns on the occasion of Church festivals or of local saints' days, and they swore in the excited audiences wholesale, as the converted Gothic conquerors and chiefs had their heathen hordes baptised by battalions. Those Christianised pagans had the water without the spirit, and seldom changed their manner of life; but it is the pride and care of the proselytising temperance priest to see that the proselyte keeps to his oath. The consequence is, that in many districts, and more especially in the north and north-west, the temperate tourist and sportsman will perpetually be put to the blush by the flat refusal of his car-driver or fisherman to taste the contents of his spirit-flask, even when the sluice-gates of the heavens stand exceptionally wide. The money saved may be spent on tea or coffee—at all events, it is expended to better purpose; and the growing generation, with sounder

constitutions, must breed a race that is physically and morally improved. It ought to be an encouragement to the Liberal Unionists that, should they succeed in re-establishing the supremacy of the law, they will have sounder materials to work upon, under greatly improved conditions. Ireland is no longer over-populated; it only needs the redistribution that should come in the natural course of things. Oppression without legal redress is no longer possible or conceivable; indeed the danger is that grievances will be fostered by the pecuniary gains of fraudulent and indolent *victims*. With the barren tracts of soil, and the people's cat-like attachment to them, there must always be much Irish distress. But with the alternative of emigration where it is acute, it will generally be voluntary; so that, after all, the poorest of the Irish will be less to be pitied than the hopeless paupers who stifle in the overcrowded London courts, and in the centres of the flourishing British industries.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE WORKING CLASSES.

“**T**HE ‘poor’ have had almost all the benefit of the great material advance of the last fifty years.” So said Mr Giffen, in his inaugural address as President of the Statistical Society in 1884, and no man speaks with greater authority. He asserts that “the poor are twice as well off as they were fifty years ago.” By the poor he does not mean paupers, but the masses of the industrious working classes. What he establishes by statistics will be readily confirmed by all whose memory goes back for twenty or thirty years. The growing prosperity of the working classes has been highly satisfactory, and a variety of causes have been conspiring towards it. It must be confessed that there was ample room for improvement. Fifty years ago the condition of the working classes was lamentable: perhaps it never had touched a lower level. The industries of the country were passing through a rev-

olutionary crisis, and steam was shaking hand-labour. Trade was dull, agriculture was depressed; an immense number of hands had been thrown out of employment. The population of the islands was half what it is at present; but the expenditure for poor-relief was positively greater, and one in each eleven souls was entered on the poor-roll. The distress was aggravated by the new Poor-law, which had summarily done away with outdoor relief. The principle of the law was sound, but the transition was sharp; and in practice the law was often arbitrarily worked by indiscreet and over-zealous Jacks-in-office. It was then that Dickens wrote 'Oliver Twist,' and Mr Bumble and Mrs Corney were not much of caricatures. Paupers were to be forced into the workhouses, where poverty was to be penalised in the interests of the ratepayers. There was something to be said in favour of the rigours of the system. The duties of the guardians were delicate and responsible. Then, as now, there was an almost imperceptible line between the poor who were paying heavy rates under pressure, and the poor who were driven into "the House" to starve upon them. Husbands and wives were summarily divorced, on the plea that it was unfair to the ratepaying public to permit paupers to breed paupers at the expense of others. No grace was given to

the honest and able-bodied, who would willingly have worked could they have found occupation. The very tools of their trades were sold up with everything else, so that it was not the fault of the guardians if they were not permanently beggared. It was no wonder that, with the horrors of that dismal imprisonment before their eyes, the working classes resigned themselves to much suffering before they submitted to it. They knew nothing of the comforts or luxuries to which their grandchildren have been gradually accustoming themselves; and at the best the untrained or less capable "hands" had been content to live upon little. In what are now the most prosperous districts of flourishing Lancashire, many of the handloom weavers were working for the almost incredible average wage of a shilling per week! Mrs Gaskell, in 'Mary Barton,' gives pathetic pictures of the pitiful struggles of the fathers of families, as the mills either closed their doors or dismissed the superfluous workmen. The employers, who in many cases were suffering themselves, and consuming their capital under stress of foreign competition, were still the absolute masters of the situation in Lancashire and elsewhere. Their gates were beset by hungry applicants for employment, like those of the London Docks at the present time, and they could readily make their own terms for

services that had been depreciated by prolonged starvation. Even the rate of wages, miserable as it might be, was in many cases merely nominal. The detestable truck system was very generally in force; and it could be enforced more relentlessly when the supply of labour was excessive. The most scandalous disclosures were elicited before Parliamentary Commissions as to the doings of "respectable men." They sold not only food, but their own cloth and cotton stuffs, to their employees at twice, or even three times, the cost price. So that by an enforced system of fraud and robbery, the starvation wages were laid under heavy stoppages—like the pay of the British soldier who has been taking liberties with his wardrobe. The working people of that day were doubly enslaved: first to the master, who could turn them into the streets, or sell them up and send them to jail for debt; and secondly, to the shopkeeper who had given the credit, so long as he had some reliable lien upon their labour. Of course the tradesman who gave credit took the risks into consideration, and had charged accordingly. The risks were serious, for the security was strictly personal. The customer lived from hand to mouth in a hovel, or rather in a cellar; he had next to no furniture, and could lose little by a moonlight flitting. Then the death-rate

was double what it is now, and there were so many chances the more of the debtor escaping in that way. It is proved by official returns that in the east of London the mortality was twice as great as in the west—although then, as now, there were pestilential slums in the fashionable quarters. One of the most interesting, but at the same time one of the most painful, chapters in the last volume of Mr Spencer Walpole's 'History of England,' is that in which he describes the dwellings of the poor in the manufacturing cities of fifty years ago—drawing for his facts on the veracious fictions of Disraeli, Kingsley, and Mrs Gaskell. The manufacturer, as Disraeli says in 'Sybil,' had become the creator of wealth—succeeding to the Turkey merchant, the West India planter, and the nabob. The mills once driven by water-power in many a lonely valley had been drawing together into advantageously situated towns, whence the produce could be more cheaply distributed. The mill-hands had followed the masters for the labour into towns built in primitive times for the accommodation of a limited population. When these towns expanded into cities, new houses were run up anyhow, and on the old models. Cheapness was, of course, the first consideration: there was no thought of free air; there was no finding sufficient space;

there was no sanitation, and only natural drainage—depending on evaporation or the fall of the ground. The overcrowding was hideous, as the stench within doors and without were poisonous. We hear of families of “decent artisans” huddled together in cellars or garrets, with scarcely room to stretch themselves in the filth or on the shake-down of rotten straw. When they rose in the morning to escape from the foul air of their dens and closes, the atmosphere of the overheated factory must have been relief, impregnated as it was with fluff and foul odours. No wonder that, with the foul air and the under-feeding, with the sharp transitions from heat to cold in scanty clothing, consumptive diseases took heavy toll of these unfortunates, and that epidemics ran a deadly course. We can conceive how the contagion of fever or of smallpox must have spread in those fetid warrens and rookeries, with no doctor, no medicines, no delicacies to tempt the fevered palate, and very often with no bread.

For in those days the working classes were left to their own devices. The official guardians of the poor consented to look after them under certain conditions; otherwise they were scarcely cared for. Then one might have rationally adopted the clap-trap political catchword of “the classes and the masses.” They were sharply

divided, and Disraeli satirises in 'Sybil' the specifics suggested by aristocrats and capitalists for the legions of toilers whose habits and troubles were absolutely strange to them. The poor were not only poor, but degraded. The shameful horrors to which female workers were subjected in the coal-pits could scarcely have gone on so long, even in those days, had they not been subterraneous. The lot of the women in the factories above-ground was comparatively enviable, yet they were at the mercy of harsh rules and grasping employers. Had the industrial classes in the towns not been recruited from the agricultural districts, to the steady depreciation of the starvation wages, the evil might have practically worked its own remedy. The diseased and emaciated breed of factory hands might have died out, with the merciless employment of premature labour. The father of a starving family had no choice. He sought to make a trifle by each of his children as soon as possible. Mere infants were kept in the mills early and late, stunting and shrivelling up in the unnatural atmosphere. Lads of tougher constitution, like "Devil's Dust" in 'Sybil,' became prematurely versed in vice, if not in villany. Boys drank and smoked with full-grown men; they married or formed illicit connections, while their social superiors of the same age were still in the school-

room. The puny infants were literally suckled on gin, and it was well for them when they went straight from the cellar to the churchyard. Cradles, of course, they had never known. The town-bred population of lawless Bedouins had necessarily no notions of religion. Neglected by men, they knew nothing of God. And they were almost as absolutely destitute of education. Fifty years ago, they may be said to have had none. Even in 1851, the children at the English schools—as opposed to Scotch and Irish—which were aided by parliamentary grants, were only 240,000. In 1881, the numbers had risen to 2,863,000—not an unsatisfactory rate of progress, it must be allowed, even when we take into account the growth of the population.

No wonder that irreligious, ignorant, oppressed, and degraded populations lend a ready ear to the seductions of voluble demagogues. There were riots and troubles, and it is surprising that they were not worse; but if Britons, as is said, fight best on full bellies, no wonder that those luckless wretches, even when the many “had gathered in their might,” seldom cared to face the police and the military. They were cowed by a show of force, and by the salutary fear of consequences. But the scandals of the oppressive system slowly worked their own cure. It would be difficult to set the “masses” against the “classes,” if the

“masses” would recollect how genuinely disinterested champions from the “classes” have often come to the rescue. Lord Ashley, for example, was no democrat by training or temperament—quite the reverse. But he had a profound sympathy with the suffering and the helpless, and he responded to what he recognised as an imperative call. Resolutely self-sacrificing, he persevered in his anxious and self-imposed task, in the face of obloquy, discouragement, and sneers. He saw the credit of his labours appropriated by others, while his plans were cramped by the friends in office who professed to help him. Baffled and disappointed time after time, resigning himself to mortifications and injustice, his constancy had its reward. Though the Factory Act of 1833 was one of his disappointments, nevertheless it set limits to the hours of labour, and enacted supervision by Government inspectors. It initiated a new system of reform, and made atrocious abuses hazardous, if not impossible. Then his own bill of 1845 regulated labour in mines and collieries; and it is notable that the chief opposition to those measures came from the identical capitalists who, for the most part, professed advanced Liberal opinions, and who were conspicuous in advocating the reforms which did not personally affect them. They

were ready to extend the franchise to any extent, for the votes of their dependants could be bought or controlled; they had been willing to emancipate the West Indian slaves, consenting to be taxed for compensation to the owners. But limiting the hours of home labour of children struck at sound economical principles, and at freedom of contract; so they were compelled, upon public and patriotic grounds, to meet revolutionary measures with uncompromising opposition.

The opposition failed, or rather, it only partially succeeded; and soon the members of the trades became strong enough to help themselves. Adventitious circumstances had seasonably assisted them. In 1845 began the great railway boom, which relieved the labour markets, offering tempting openings to congested capital, and consequently raised all classes of wages. Mechanics and mill-hands had better pay and more leisure. Moreover, the most capable of them were benefiting by the spread of education. In worse times, "Devil's Dust," or rather Mr Disraeli, had suggested a strike as the most practical of remedies. The prescription had been adopted by the new trades - unions, which were making offensive and defensive demonstrations against the capitalists, and which already, half a century ago, were exciting their grave apprehensions. Then

emigration to America and the Colonies set in earnest, and the incessant drain that has been going on ever since has bolstered up the value of English work. Men strike now, submitting to sacrifices, and reckoning with the possibilities of disastrous defeat, for a rise on wages that would have seemed wealth to their grandfathers.

On the whole, there can be no question, and Mr Giffen has conclusively proved it, that men who live by all manner of manual labour are infinitely better off than they were fifty years ago. It is the same with agricultural as with urban labourers, and even with seamen, although our merchant seamen have been disappearing. The average rise in wages has been over 70 per cent in certain cases, as in that of the Bradford weavers it has been 150 per cent. The wages of field-labourers are generally 60 per cent higher than before the repeal of the corn-laws. Those of seamen have gone up in nearly similar proportion. Yet the rise does not represent everything, so far as the city workmen are concerned. They get from 50 to 100 per cent more money for time that has been shortened by about a fifth. As to the cost of living, taking it all round, in Mr Giffen's opinion it is much the same, though many once unfamiliar comforts have been brought within easy reach of the working man. The food indispensable to

subsistence is far cheaper. Wheat fluctuates comparatively little in value, and now, by no possibility, short of disastrous naval defeats, could it ever go up again to famine prices. Fifty years ago the quartern-loaf usually cost ninepence. Fifty years ago wheat fluctuated in two or three years from 36s. to 82s. per imperial bushel, while in 1810, in the same time, it had touched 126s. During the last fourteen years its widest range has been 10s., and the difference is scarcely appreciable, considering the regulation impositions of the inexorable middleman. As for the luxuries of the free breakfast-table, the duty on tea has been reduced to a trifle, and sugar costs less than a third of what it used to cost. Clothing of all kinds is cheaper, although the saving in dress may not be great. On the other hand, there has been a considerable advance in meat; but nothing shows more conclusively the rise of the working classes than the fact that the cost of meat can be felt as a grievance. Their grandfathers never tasted mutton or beef except through charity, unless they found a bone in the gutter or anticipated the pigs in the hog-wash pail. By far the most serious rise has been in rent, and it is that which swallows the other savings. Rent, as a rule, is said to be one and a-half times higher than it used to be. But then it must be remembered that the workman

not only earns double wages, but has infinitely superior accommodation. It is an immeasurable distance from the old Leeds or Manchester dens to the apartments in some new model lodging-house, with its roomy corridors and airy verandahs. Good housing means good health, increased and prolonged capacity for work, immunity from doctor's fees and from drugs, and a family brought up among bright surroundings, with fair prospects of getting forward. Undoubtedly much remains to be done, and especially for those of the working women who are doomed to independence and condemned to self-support; and there are special localities which may be exceptionally affected by accidental circumstances. Mr Besant has brought home to us, in his 'Children of Gibeon,' as in others of his marvellously realistic novels, the condition of the poor seamstress in the East of London. Their lot has always been hard enough and sad enough. It was sad enough when Hood wrote "The Song of the Shirt"; but since then, the introduction of the sewing-machine has literally, if we may be pardoned for saying so, "played the devil with them." "Stitch, stitch, stitch" as they may, it is barely possible to keep body and soul together. Imagine the effect of continual "button-stitching" on the strained eyesight and the aching brain, from soon after dawn

to long after dark, by the dim light of a cheap tallow-candle. Conceive the hopeless prospect of that dismal drudgery, stretching forward to perpetuity with failing strength. The cases of overtasked classes such as that are neither cheering nor hopeful, and there is much that is perhaps unattainable to be aspired to, beyond constructing "palaces of delight" for the recreation of the people. Yet the working folks and their friends may take comfort from the knowledge that general progress has been steady, and shows no signs of being at a standstill. I close with the figures of the statistician, as I began by quoting him. In 1849 there were 934,000 paupers in England. In 1881, with a doubled population, the number had fallen to 808,000. In Ireland, the reduction had been nearly by five-sixths, but then famines and emigration have depleted the country. In 1831 there were 439,000 depositors in savings-banks, with 14 millions of money. In 1881 there were considerably more than 4 millions of depositors, with 80 millions of money. So, to end as we began, it seems pretty clear that the poor are twice as well off as they were fifty years ago, and it is a very consolatory reflection.

CHAPTER XXVII.

OUR COLONISTS.

THERE are colonies and colonies, and each takes its character from special productions that have peopled it or made its fortune. Some seem intended for capitalists living in luxury by commerce, and levying their commissions on the labours of inferior races. In others the life is hard and laborious, but there is health for wealth, with reasonable comforts. While in those that are perhaps the best adapted to English constitutions, there is room for all, and there are prizes for the fortunate. Personally, we should prefer the last, since existence is sweetened by hopeful excitement. The Canadian Dominion has done well, no doubt; but timber, fish, and grain from distant "fertile belts" mean indefinite endurance with moderate profits. Thanks to the severity of the prolonged winters, only the fittest can survive; and so in the course of time we have a sturdy race, pretty

equally removed alike from poverty and riches. The glorious West Indies have been nearly played out, since the liberation of the slaves and the free trade in sugar. Except in Barbadoes, where the nigger must work or starve, there is little now to tempt the white planter to those Western Islands of the Blessed, with the beauties of a Paradise and the worries of a Purgatory, where he is bullied by the blacks and legislated for by mulattoes. There is much money to be made in Hong-Kong or Singapore, where English merchants levy lucrative percentages on the collection and distribution of Eastern goods; but over the most successful hangs suspended a sword of Damocles, and they are in haste to place their lives and their treasures in safety. At best there is a dash of bitter in the overflowing cup, and chronic liver-complaint is a disagreeable souvenir of the most brilliant course of happy speculation. As for the Cape, except that you have heat for cold, it has much in common with the hard-working Canadas. If the chances of strokes of luck in the diamond-fields, and the prospects of crushing fabulous riches out of auriferous quartz-reefs, be set aside, the English adventurer seldom does much with his flocks and herds, his "mealies" and his ostrich-feathers, beyond keeping the wolf of poverty on the howl at a distance from his door.

Our Australasian colonies are the most expansive and the most progressive, and in almost every respect the most inviting. The one drawback to emigrating to them seems to be their remoteness, and every year they are being brought nearer to us by inter-oceanic railway communication and accelerated steam-routes. When we look back at their small and unpromising beginnings, their progress is as wonderful as their origin is disreputable. It was only in 1770 that Captain Cook took possession of South-Eastern Australia for the British crown, and in 1788 we utilised Port Jackson by making it a penal settlement for the worst of our convicts. The early associations with crime and its punishment were not of a nature to recommend these countries. Though Cook had taken formal possession of one corner of the insular continent, boundless expanses of the rest were left open to all comers. But no other nation thought it worth while to colonise, where there were neither precious minerals, nor fragrant spice-groves, nor a semi-civilised race of traders, nor any of the recognised short cuts to riches. Baron Hübner points out, in his '*Through the British Empire*,' how greatly it was to the credit of British intelligence that it appreciated the sources of wealth in the vast pasturages of Australia. Infant settlements, nursed and fostered by the Government,

gradually came to be expanded by private enterprise. Emancipated convicts were the pioneers of colonial empire, but they were soon supplemented or succeeded by gentlemen of some capital and education. Never in the history of colonisation have there been sharper contrasts in so limited a population. A picked class of settlers were everywhere mixed up with the half-reclaimed scum and dregs of the old country. The cost of the long sea-passage was prohibitory to the honest poor, and at first there was scarcely a place for them. Convict labour sufficed for the drudgery of the settlements. There we had modern chapters of the patriarchal life reproduced from their prototypes in the sacred history. There was a comparatively wealthy aristocracy of squatters, with their flocks and herds grazing in scantily peopled territory. Except that those modern patriarchs lived in stations of shingle, instead of under canvas; when they entertained—which they had frequently occasion to do from the first—they fetched a sheep or a lamb from the flock, exactly like Abraham or Isaac. Like Abraham and Isaac, they had their difficulties with the people of the land, rolling them over like rabbits when they strove with them, with modern firearms. Like Abraham with Lot, they often strove with each other for the springs or pools which made their runs worth occupying.

So long as there was ample elbow-room, each new immigrant was almost bound to make money steadily. He could generally dodge the occasional visitations of drought, and his flocks multiplied freely in the course of nature, though the natives and the dingoes might levy tribute on them. The great enemy he had to dread was disease, and disastrously infectious epidemics would sometimes bring ruin to the richest. A noteworthy life it was in many ways. The squatter made much money with extravagant though involuntary waste. The clip of his wool was all that was worth anything; and the carcasses with their hides were for long cast away by the million, while starvation was stalking abroad in Europe. The most successful squatter was not only an exile but a solitary, and, had it not been for the healthy open-air life, would have been apt to turn misanthrope and mope himself into insanity. The nearest of his neighbours lives perhaps thirty miles away, and the further removed the neighbours were, the more the monopolist was satisfied. There were no county towns, there were no villages, not even "townships"; there were no posts, and he received letters and papers at irregular intervals when the drays took the wool down to the coast, to come back laden with the groceries. When the capitals of the province were still in their infancy,

he had little inducement to visit them. There was never much fun going on; there were no clubs; the inns were wretched, and overcrowded with questionable company; so he stuck to his station and saved his money, till he could afford to sell or place a manager in charge, when he generally came home with a handsome fortune. During his long and lonely residence in the bush, he had acquired some of the vices and virtues of the savage. He had been forced to protect himself from the blacks and the bush-rangers, and strange stories were told of his habitual recklessness of their lives and his own. Hospitality he practised, as a matter of course; and each tramp, with his bundle of "swag" slung at his back, found supper and a shake-down at any station. The solitary squatter, *fiute de mieux*, must often have mixed in queer society; nor could he afford to make embarrassing inquiries as to the antecedents of his own shepherds and stock-riders. The marvel was to see how, when these men came home, they could show the versatility of the accomplished English gentleman, cast the slough of savagery that had gradually been encrusting them, and resume the manners of their early training.

There was a deal of wild romance in the Australia of thirty or forty years ago. As the wide solitudes were more lawless and more inac-

cessible, they were the scenes of constant crime and outrage, and the retreat of the luckless, the criminal, and the desperate. Many a sad story had its melancholy end in some shepherd's hut, where a beggared and degraded gentleman had been brooding remorsefully over his sorrows and sins. If he could not have oblivion for himself in the bush, he was sure never to be shamed by unwelcome recognition. Escaped convicts were pretty sure of finding safety beyond the range of the "metropolitan police." Whether they sought honest occupation or kennelled with the dingoes in the scrub, they were ready to turn their hands to anything in the way of crime,—to stop a dray for the sake of tapping the spirit-kegs, or to shoot a squatter for his watch and weapons. Then, when a native band had a blood-feud with some settler, each copse or gully might cover an ambush, and the boomerang or poisoned spear might whiz from behind any bush. No wonder that the settler was ready with the revolver, and would shoot "on sight" at anything suspicious. As for bushranging as a profession, it could scarcely be said to exist. There were no regular roads, and little that was worth robbing. The golden days of bushranging began with the gold-digging; with the growth of mining towns and the shooting up of solitary townships; with coaches and treasure-convoys to be assailed in

force; with outlying banking establishments to be carried by surprises; and almost simultaneously came increased police efficacy, so that the industry, like that of the individual gold-seekers, had scarcely proved lucrative ere it began to decline.

Now, although we still hear of an occasional outrage, the roads in Australia are as reasonably safe as those in any of the English counties. Now, Australia is not only being civilised but refined. Now, each colony is self-contained, and a country to live and die in. Now, the Australian is no longer an exile but a patriot. He has his home affections and local patriotic aspirations. The great cities, with their sumptuous public buildings, and their luxurious public gardens and parks, contain nearly all that makes existence desirable. The squatter, even if he be English-born, need not come to England to enjoy himself. There are capital clubs in all the chief cities, where he drops at once into the company of congenial acquaintances. There are dances, and dinners, and picnics, and race-meetings, with any number of attractive and accomplished young women, eager to welcome proposals on the slightest provocation. There are politics for those who care for them, though parties have changed, greatly to the disadvantage of aristocrats and capitalists. The growth of an

imperious, short-sighted, and selfish democracy is a great fact, which capitalists and great landholders are compelled to count with. Still, and notwithstanding the unequal imposts at which he grumbles—notwithstanding Radical land-legislation and the intrusive “cockatoos” settling down by the water and compelling him either to buy or contract his boundaries—the squatter is far better off than unfortunate landlords in the British home dominions. Some of the country mansions of the magnates, standing in their picturesque domains, are as comfortable, and almost as magnificent, as any English castle or hall. The dinners are as well served; the cellars are as well stocked; there are excellent libraries to gratify the literate; and the tables in the spacious and luxurious morning-rooms are strewn with the latest English novels and periodicals.

No process of development or scheme of federation can ever make Australia homogeneous. Nature, soil, and climate oppose insuperable obstacles. But meantime man is doing all that may be done to improve communications and facilitate intercourse. Forty years ago one could only travel in the saddle, or in the intolerable tediousness of the lumbering bullock-dray. Now, the navigable rivers are well served by rival steam-companies; railways are carried cheaply across the plains, and over the dividing hill-

ranges, by costly gradients ; while tolerable roads connect even those bush towns which lie out of the world among the gum-trees and kangaroos. Owing to the climate and physical conditions, the highest civilisation and prosperity of Australia will always be on a comparative fringe along the seaboard. Trade concentrates in the advantageously situated seaports, since there are no internal industries except mining. The navigable rivers soon shrink and shallow in the summer, as you follow them up through the reefs and cataracts ; and even the rich grazing-plains gradually dry up into deserts as they extend beyond the influence of the sea-fogs and the rainfall from the mountains. The Australian settlements are hopelessly severed from each other by the most inhospitable deserts on the surface of the globe. Much of that desert must always remain unexplored, though heroic explorers have crossed it in all directions. They have told us all we need care to know of its unparalleled horrors. Water over hundreds of leagues is almost wanting ; the terrible spinifex grass, with its porcupine spikes, ulcerating the feet and legs of the horses, is almost less trying than the matted copses of the dwarf eucalyptus, closing in the outlook in all directions, and through which the explorer must literally hew his way. Swarms of poisonous ants and other insects make it impossible to lie down in the

shade; and the feverish repose that comes of utter exhaustion can only be sought in the sunshine. Yet although even caravan-routes by camel can never be established across those wastes, Australian enterprise has spanned them with the telegraph. Southern Australia has connected itself with the Gulf of Carpentaria by a line nearly 2000 miles in length, at a cost of £370,000. Much of the line was laid through waterless sands, each article of food, with the posts and the wires, having to be carted over enormous distances. Yet the triumph over apparently insuperable difficulties is perhaps less surprising than the fact that human beings can be found to occupy permanently the isolated stations. Their lot is even less enviable than that of the keepers of the lonely lighthouses on the rocks and islands off the northern coasts, whose only visitors are the ferocious savages against whose attacks the towers are fortified. The Australians can never do much more than nibble at the edges of a territory covering nearly the same area as Europe; but their past rate of progress will be marvellously accelerated should they encourage commerce, as they have developed stock-breeding. Yet it is a question whether men and women of the English race will not deteriorate in that dry Australian atmosphere, salubrious and inspiring as it may be.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ANGLO-INDIANS.

BBRITISH domination is indebted for its imperial extent to the adaptability of the British race to all climates. We have settled the Canadas in spite of the intense severity of the winters. We have peopled a southern continent with its archipelagoes in the Pacific, making merchandise of everything, from pine-apples to wools. We have our marts for the distribution of tropical produce at Singapore, Hong-Kong, Shanghai, and scores of other oriental centres; and we still hold on to the fever-stricken colonies of West Africa, where coffins and quinine command a ready sale. But perhaps the most remarkable monument of English energy is the empire we have established in Asia. The nearest parallel to it is under Dutch rule in Java; and without going into details, or drawing invidious distinctions, we have certainly no reason to shrink from the comparison. The Dutch have asserted

their supremacy over a laborious and fairly tractable population by freely expending the "poor whites" they exported for tropical service. The merchant princes and well-paid officials in Java—and we admit that the steaming moisture of those spice-islands is very similar to that of the palm-houses at Kew—live behind spacious verandahs artificially swept by air-currents, and seldom stir abroad save in carriages or palanquins. But the Englishman in India, nineteen times out of twenty, must dispense with the more costly luxuries which make tropical existence tolerable. Soldiers and civilians on moderate pay have to work extremely hard to earn it, and must always have reserves of bodily and mental power, so as to answer to any emergency. They may doze away the heat in dreamy siestas, though they are just as likely to be found in the jungle or by the tanks, if there is sport of any kind to tempt them. But the intelligent natives have learned by long experience of what those easy-going loungers and sportsmen are capable. Bazaar gossip keeps alive vivid recollections of fields won by handfuls of the well-drilled Feringee, from Plassy and Assaye down to the fighting of the Mutiny. Prestige, although it may be ridiculed in the West, still means much in the East, and with the reconquest of India in those days of deadly peril,

we took out a fresh lease of British power. It was significant that, in our extremity, they were the most intelligent of the native princes who held most stanchly and loyally to the English alliance. And the suppression of the Mutiny was only a supreme effort of men who have always proved up to their work. We see military duties carried on day after day by Englishmen stifling in dusty cantonments, and shrivelling up in the glare of a tropical sun. We see civilians in the chief cities of the Presidencies, drudging day after day among piles of documents, exercising themselves over columns of intricate figures, and literally earning their pay and pensions in the sweat of their exhausted bodies. We see magistrates settling complicated cases, among much hard counter-swearing, in suffocating and evil-smelling courts, knowing well that the rapid decisions are subject to revision and reversion; and sometimes we hear of the lawgivers in outlying districts going through their wide jurisdictions in the saddle at a hand-gallop, getting off to deal out justice in patriarchal fashion beneath the spreading shade of a teak or a sahl tree, and recruiting nature after the labours of the day by a harder gallop after the "pigs" with the boar-spear that was the magistrate's wand of office. We know not whether the soldiers or the civilians deserve the

greater credit ; and indeed, civilians like Wake and Kavanagh showed in the days of the Mutiny that they could be soldiers and heroes on occasion. It is hard, resolute, and self-reliant men like these who are the genuine descendants of the Drakes and the Raleighs ; and it is they, and predecessors like them, who in a very few generations have given the sovereigns of England the empire of India.

Hindustan had always been habituated to being conquered, but it had never before been conquered to beneficent purpose. Our titles might scarcely bear legal inspection, but there can be no question as to the beneficent consequences of our rule. And it must be remembered that we have only transferred the rights of owners whose titles for the most part were far more vicious than our own. The characteristics of all previous conquests were devastation and oppression. Growing from small beginnings in Fort George and Fort William, our great Company of militant merchants gradually fought its way to the succession of the Moguls. Its handfuls of soldiers, ever advancing, moved everywhere among ruins, moral and material. The temples, minars, and magnificent mausoleums in the sacred cities of the north are of comparatively modern date. Hardly had the Great Mogul made himself almost omnipotent

in the peninsula than his empire began to tremble. The Mahrattas and the Sikhs tore great provinces away; other chieftains, by the right of the sword, carved themselves out royalties and viceroalties; and when a principality was the prize of one dashing campaign, anarchy and intrigue were everywhere in the ascendant. The English may occasionally have fallen into the fashion of laying the weak and the vanquished under unfair contribution; but those acts of their high-handed injustice were exceptional, and at least they tolerated no injustice but their own. Their motto has always been *nulla vestigia retrorsum*, and they have baffled and beaten each military power which faced them and dared to bar their progress. The hordes of fearless Mahratta horsemen in the open plains were crumpled up by the steady fire of old brown Bess in the hands of the small and serried battalions in scarlet. The Sikhs of the Five Rivers, though organised by a Runjeet Singh and disciplined by Avitabile and other distinguished European officers, failed to make a successful fight, though they had their backs to their own formidable base of operations: and the sudden collapse of the warlike Ameers of Scinde was perhaps even more startling, considering the character of their climate and country. Wherever we have carried the British colours,

law, order, and comparative prosperity have followed steadily in the track. We put down the Pindaris as we had crushed the Mahrattas; we summarily stamped out Thuggism, and have nearly extirpated the omnipresent Dacoits. We have consolidated the empire from the Himalayas and the Indus to Cape Comorin. We have reduced the most powerful of the semi-independent feudatories to diplomatic subjection, giving each nominal autocrat a Resident as his mayor of the palace. Each native directly under British rule knows that his savings, such as they are, are his own; nor need he fear to give notice to neighbours and the tax-gatherers that he is sensibly bettering his condition.

Thanks chiefly to the annexations which have been so frequently and freely condemned, the progress of India in the last half-century has been wonderful. We may doubt whether the blood and the treasure we have expended could possibly have been better invested. Each state we annexed soon began to reap the benefit of fixed and far more moderate taxation, as of unbiassed and even-handed justice. The village policeman is no longer the village bully: he knows that it is at the peril of his place if he takes a bribe, or refuses to protect the poor and the helpless. That sense of an efficient and ever-present justice would in itself be an in-

appreciable gain. But besides that, all impartial travellers are agreed in their reports of the increasing comfort of the peasantry. The fields are better cultivated and irrigated, the people are better clothed, the rough hovels of mud are being replaced by neat and well-furnished cottages. Water has been dammed and stored back against periodical droughts. Canals and embankments are being constructed to prevent periodical floodings. Improved communications have already done much towards the prompt alleviation of periodical famines. As the condition of the native becomes more prosperous and less precarious, he has risen in self-respect. His bearing is no longer servile as it was, when he lived from hand to mouth in perpetual terror of the bands of oriental *écorcheurs* and *tondeurs*, when, if he was suspected of having hidden treasure in his field, he was put through a course of diabolical tortures. He is still respectful to the Europeans, whom he rightly reverences as his superiors; but he does not seek to propitiate them by that crouching deference which characterises the lowest orders under native rule. But the most convincing proof of the progress in Indian prosperity is the increasing difficulty of recruiting for the army, in spite of pay, pensions, and a social position. Even the warlike Sikhs, once spoiled for any-

thing but a military life, have been settling down to the peaceful pursuits which they find remunerate them better. And the penniless folk prefer the public works where they can live on rice and a little *ghee*, and save their wages, to the service where the pay is smaller, and where they cannot settle with a family in a permanent home.

The condition of the governing caste in India has been changing likewise, though it cannot be said that, like the natives, the English are generally better off. When the Indian services were nearly equivalent to a life-long exile, the old Company had to be generous to get good men. The Company paid handsomely after it had forbidden private trade, and on the whole was admirably served. Now the Government not only takes advantage of the growing struggle at home for decent competencies, but can offer different inducements. Formerly the "griffin," going out from Haileybury or Addiscombe, burned his boats, cut his home connections, and bade a long farewell to his nearest and dearest. The voyage round the Cape might last from six to nine months, and letters, of course, took an equally unconscionable time before Waghorn had invented the overland route. When a man dropped a tear over the tomb of his mother, ten months after the demise, he bore the loss

with comparative stoicism. Those Indian exiles became selfish and self-contained. Not a few of them died of beer and brandy-pawnee, of liver complaints, or of jungle fever. If they had iron constitutions, or were content, after some preliminary indiscretions, to "purge and live cleanly," they became exceeding hard specimens of humanity. Like Hannibal Chollop of Eden celebrity, they were "fever proof, and likewise agur." It was the more to the credit of their constitutions and self-control that they had none of those modern sanatoria within reach which now prolong and purify European existence. If a man's luck were bad, he might stifle in the plain cantonments for the better part of his service. When he got a brief furlough, he either found his way to the enervating heat of the capitals of the Presidencies, or, if he were a keen sportsman, he went on a sporting expedition to some neighbouring jungle tract famous for its big game. There are charming chapters in the 'Old Forest Ranger,' and many a delightful description of jungle life; but Mansfield and his companions carried on their sports in an atmosphere that was unwholesome, if not positively malarious. After a ten years' sojourn in Hindustan, the European generally took his three years' furlough. Habituated to the oriental manner of life, with the obsequious attentions of endless ser-

vants who did everything for him, and cost next to nothing, he was utterly abroad under the modest roof where his parents had saved the money to educate him. He missed the mess-table, and found the rabbits and the partridges but poor substitutes for the royal tiger or the bison. When he came up to town, he found congenial society in the "Jungle Club"; but, after all, the old comrades only bored each other and sympathised in their common griefs. With natural aspirations after fashionable gaiety, and even without the constitutional shyness of Mr Joseph Sedley, they found themselves shut out from the world of fashion, or even the ordinary London society. So that, generally speaking, they were exceedingly glad when the holiday, so long looked forward to, had come to an end.

To be sure, the Anglo-Indian, when bored to death at home, had the resource of falling in love and marrying. If he were a field-officer with a staff appointment, he was far from ineligible; and if he were a rising civilian with liberal pay and allowances, pecuniarily he was a catch. But inveterate old Indians knew a trick worth two of wedlock; and the keenest of husband-hunting spinsters might hesitate if she had any heart at all. English children, born and brought up in the plains, drooped and died in the sickening heats of the summers. At a

certain age they had to be consigned to relations in England, and whole batches of the innocents were shipped for the home voyage, under the charge of professional nurses and matrons. The Anglo-Indian Rachels might be as the apples of their husbands' eyes; they might revel in all manner of luxuries, and never have to bother about the bills: but the dreadful doom was ever impending, of being robbed of their darlings one by one. When they parted with their children, they lost them for ever; for at that tender age the infants formed new ties, and subsequently made the acquaintance of their mothers as strangers. Poorer parents suffered still more. They felt double pangs at parting. For the subaltern had his feelings like the wealthy collector, and he was subjected to something like a process of flaying in paying the passage-money, the home-board, and the school charges. The consequence was that marriages were rare; and although those that did come off might theoretically have been made in heaven, they often landed the contracting parties in quite another place, what with debts, duns, and mutual recriminations. Gentlemen of a domestic turn occasionally married attractive Eurasians, or more generally formed temporary and less reputable connections with native fair ones.

Now all that has been altered, and chiefly by

the application of steam to travel. There may be less money, proportionately, in circulation among soldiers and civilians than before; but the money goes further in tempering the severest conditions of what must always be exile. Now, it is well worth while running home on a six months' leave. Now, the fares have been much reduced by excessive competition, and the P. and O. have long ceased to have a monopoly of the comforts and conveniences of the overland route. But what has made Hindustan infinitely more habitable is the introduction of railways and the creation of hill sanatoria. In the olden time travelling was dear at the best, and intolerably disagreeable. You were slung along at a rough jolting trot in *palkies* or bullock-carts. You were shaken out of a troubled sleep by relays of sulky bearers, going out of step of set purpose; and on those interminable forced marches you fared anything but sumptuously on skinny fowls in the *dawk* bungalows. In the olden time, when you shifted quarters, still, and as a rule, you had to stick to the plains. The heights and healthy spurs of the Himalayas were as much beyond immediate reach to the fever-stricken invalid as the Delectable Mountains to Christian and Hopeful. There were no hotels and no houses there. Now, the man of modest means, scorched and sunburnt, grilled and devilled in cantonments, can take a

first-class ticket by train, and travel under the cooling influences of ice and *kuskus-tatties*. He will turn off sooner or later at a terminus, whence he will be forwarded or hoisted by prompt despatch from the torrid to the extremely temperate zone. His eyes have been aching for the last ten or twelve months in contemplation of these blazing browns and dismal sepias which stretch away in deepening shades to the dim and dusty horizon. He awakens the next morning with something like a shivering fit, among hill passes and precipices and bottomless gorges; among rushing torrents and tumbling waterfalls; among ferns, and the birds and flowers of his boyhood. That facility of change relieves the sense of indefinite confinement, and does much to keep himself and his wife in health and condition. But it does far more, inasmuch as it makes India his home, and spares him the breaking up of his home-circle. Even the children may be sent to school in the hills, at a considerable economy of tears and passage-money.

Anglo-Indians in the service are not so liberally paid as formerly, and certainly the civilians are kept more closely to their work. The efficiency and the limited numbers of our administrative staff surprise intelligent foreigners, used as they are to State frugality in their own countries. But in one important respect Anglo-

Indians generally can economise their money now, at least if they are not foolishly prodigal of hospitality. In the old days, on any decent introduction—one might almost say on no introduction at all—the casual stranger was welcomed under a countryman's roof, and it was hardly possible for him to outstay his welcome. At Calcutta, Madras, or Bombay, some raw lad from the old country, on the bare strength of a line from a mutual acquaintance, had the run of a hospitable establishment for months, and an intolerable nuisance he must often have been. When a strange sportsman or adventurous traveller penetrated to the interior of the country, he was passed on from mess to mess and from station to station. Except for actual travelling expenses, for washing-bills, or ammunition, he need scarcely put a hand in his pockets. Now, the profusion of promiscuous globe-trotters with no special recommendations has spoiled that pleasant little game. Now, the victim of some chance or thoughtless introduction is no longer expected to offer indefinite entertainment, although the old traditions still survive, and Indian hospitality is still proverbial. Nor is the sport that used to tempt the sojourner rather than the tourist all that it once was. But as India becomes yearly better worth the visiting, when the tourist tra-

velling with circular tickets can be accommodated everywhere in respectable hotels, the ties with our garrisons there will be knit more closely, and we shall come to a better understanding of the intelligent natives, by which our system of governing them will certainly gain.

CHAPTER XXIX.

OUR CRIMINALS.

WERE the criminal classes to be enlightened as to the past and polled, we may be persuaded that the majority would disapprove of modern legislation, notwithstanding the horrors of earlier penal days. On the other hand, and it is more to the purpose, society has gained greatly. While the population of the kingdom has doubled, the convicts undergoing punishment have been reduced by something approaching to five-sixths. Punishment, meted out on an inexorable system, has been made dull, distasteful, and deterrent. Society is no longer satisfied to lock up its wild animals, or hang them out of hand. It treats them as reasonable beings, although they may be ignorant, vicious, and degraded; and it seeks to educate, elevate, and reform them. The modern prison is a penitentiary and a moral hospital as well. The confinement, with its course of cure, is made irksome

in the extreme to men, however wretched their condition, who have been inured to profligacy and licence. Their health, if it be not hopelessly shattered, is renovated by a strict and severe regimen ; but even convalescents have reason to detest the treatment. It may seem superfluous to speak of the modern system as "distasteful." All "coercion," to borrow contemporary political language, is distasteful to those who indulge in infringements of the laws. But there is coercion and coercion ; and the exploded methods, with their atrocities, had much to recommend them to ruffians who were made reckless by the very conditions of their lives.

The horrors of the old system can hardly be exaggerated, as the law was draconic in its blood-thirsty severity. But the criminal, if he ever thought at all, knew he put in for a lottery with many chances in his favour. The law, that visited so many trivial offences with death, was constantly softened down or eluded. Up to a year or two before her Majesty's accession, mere children might be sent to the gallows for pilfering the value of a few coppers. People were still being strung up by the score or the dozen, of a Monday morning, before Newgate. But while not a few were executed, the majority escaped. Good-natured juries declined to convict ; kindly judges, when their digestions were working satis-

factorily, sent in recommendations to mercy which had generally their weight with Home Secretaries. Even when a hardened reprobate was sentenced to death, there were long delays between the trial and its sensational *dénouement*. In the meantime, there were many ways known to the initiated and their advisers by which they might slip through the meshes of the law. So that the very severity of the penal laws defeated their purpose. Short of the death sentence, a term of imprisonment had nothing in it that seemed so very terrible to the desperate. Excitement was the salt of their reckless lives, and they found varieties of excitement in captivity. All the English jails were overcrowded, and malefactors of all kinds and degrees were locked up in common. The ruffian who had been the terror of the town and of his comrades was still, in spite of the turnkeys, the cock of the roost. He swaggered and he bullied; he had his circle of parasites and flatterers; he generally got money somehow from without, having secreted the proceeds of his latest robberies; or he laid his fellow-prisoners under contribution; or he was treated by way of conciliating his patronage. The criminal with money and the means of "squaring" his jailers, passed the noisy days at skittles or tennis; he still drank far more than was good for him; and if he chanced to

have a weakness for the fair sex, he might even enjoy the society of his favourites. The ordinary criminals of the humble rank and file of course found the restraint far less tolerable. Less hardened, less popular, and perhaps less plucky, they were more sensible to the dark side of the prisoner's existence. They starved on precarious and insufficient food. They slept in stifling and fetid dens, on rotten straw or in a tattered blanket. They might be manacled on slight pretexts, or none at all, in fetters of intolerable weight that made rest or sleep impossible. They were attacked by disease or the deadly jail epidemics, and there were no arrangements for nursing them in their misery. Still, they took the rough with the smooth; and what with their varying prospects, and the wild company they kept, there was always excitement in one form or another. Could they have surveyed the future calmly, calculating its chances, the worst terror would have been transportation. But ignorant men, dimly enlightened by vague rumours, failed to realise all that transportation implied. Selling to servitude as "apprentices" in the plantations had been superseded by the hulks; and when the hulks with the "hulk fever" had shocked the public conscience, we got rid of our irreclaimables and our reclaimables alike by life-long exile to the antipodes. The hulks, by

the way, were not definitely put an end to till the old "Defence" had been burned off Woolwich in the summer of 1857. The first consignments of convicts to Australia were tortured on the tedious voyage. They suffered scarcely less than the slaves who had been shipped on "the middle passage" from West Africa to the West Indies. They were fettered together by pairs in the pestilential hold, parched by thirst, suffocated by heat, and only relieved occasionally by the ravages of the fevers that thinned their numbers. Expostulations in Parliament brought some measure of relief; but once the criminals had been disembarked at Port Jackson or elsewhere, their condition was scarcely bettered. As Sir Edward du Cane remarks in his admirable little volume, to which I am indebted for many facts and figures,—“For a long time, but one idea seems to have prevailed in the management of these settlements—viz., that of grinding severity.” One dare hardly hint at the nameless horrors involuntarily tolerated by the authorities charged with the administration of Norfolk Island. As for murder, we are told it was so frequent that a discharged convict replied to an official question, “I have seen so many, that I do not know which you refer to.” Yet still, and even if the criminals under sentence had realised all the terrors of that antipodean Inferno, they

might nevertheless have buoyed themselves up in their recklessness with the certainties of excitement and adventure. The life was enlivened by mutinies and murders; the man might be changed into a devil, but he worked in gangs of congenial disposition, and the very chains that fretted his wearied limbs were the links that bound together the brotherhood of infamy. His seething passions might find pleasurable vent, if he possessed his soul in patience, when he brained an unsuspecting jailer or knocked an objectionable comrade on the head. Moreover, there were well-authenticated instances of successful escapes. It might be a case of out of the frying-pan into the fire, when he exchanged the prison rations for hunting opossum in the bush, or cast away his prison dress in the company of savages. But, after all, there was always some sort of sensation, as there were fitful glimmerings of hope to break in upon the most dismal depression.

From the convicts' point of view, the curse of our present system is, that it has absolutely eliminated the element of excitement. The rascal brought up for trial knows pretty nearly what he may expect, making allowance for somewhat arbitrary lengths of sentences. When once in prison under lock and key, exemplary conduct may abbreviate his term, but the best of luck can do nothing more for him. He may play the

hypocrite like Littimer and Uriah Heep in 'David Copperfield,' he may humbug the chaplain and smooth down the superintendent, but nothing can relax the rules to which he is submitted. All the thought of advanced reformers has been devoted to making the prison dull and disagreeable. In the evil old days there was nearly free trade in drink; cigars and tobacco might be bought or smuggled in. Now the dissipated are summarily cut off from their spirits and narcotics, and they suffer accordingly like caged dipsomaniacs. Nor is that the worst of it. It is notorious that stopping drink and tobacco, should the constitution be strong enough to benefit by the ordeal, gives an extraordinary impulse to the appetite. The enfeebled frame makes a successful struggle to repair itself, and the stomach craves for satisfaction of some sort. But the caged criminal is put on short commons: science has roughly settled, by some rule of thumb or of averages, what should support life without unduly endangering health. It is obvious that hard-and-fast rules must press sharply upon most, as to men with appetites beyond the ordinary it must mean little less than perpetual torment. And so far is that stern principle carried, that our English prison administration declines to consider those mortal weaknesses which are common to both the decent and the

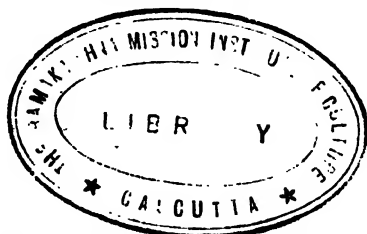
debauched. In France and other Continental countries, good conduct is rewarded by permitting the prisoners certain little luxuries out of the wages they have earned by their personal industry. Those practical foreigners have come to the obvious conclusion that immediate relief, with by no means trifling enjoyments, must be a wholesome stimulus. Our British prison reformers take higher ground. They have settled to their satisfaction that giving more food to a hungry wretch, and following up the extra ounces of diet with a few whiffs of twist or cavendish, is an appeal to the baser instincts, and calculated to lower the self-respect they are endeavouring to raise. So our prisoners are cheered to industry in the workshop by the prospect of having a sovereign or two additional to expend when they are restored to society at the end of their sentences. But what presses hardest on them is the solitary confinement, with the system of enforced silence. Solitude and silence would be bad enough to the man of intellectual resources, who has been in some degree disciplined to self-control. It would seem that nothing but stolid callousness can save the ordinary criminal from being driven through depression and despair into insanity. It is not my purpose to discuss the arguments on the question : experienced reformers have settled it to their own satisfaction.

It is certain that the solitary and silent system has, at all events, the merit of being terribly deterrent, and that when criminals are sentenced a second and a third time, it is assuredly not because they underrate the penalties of a conviction. The prisoner on a short sentence is shut up in his own cell, except when taken out for exercise, instruction, or for service in the chapel : during longer sentences he is confined through the night and at meal-times ; and when he is brought out for associated labour, he is forbidden to exchange a word with his fellow-workers. The first Prison Act subsequently to the accession of the Queen was passed in 1839, and went into most minute detail as to all arrangements for the health and good discipline of prisoners. The model prison at Pentonville was designed as an embodiment of it, at a cost of £180 for each of its 520 separate cells ; and within six years fifty-four new prisons were built on the same plan, with an aggregate of 11,600 cells. So we have travelled fast and far since the days when our forefathers were content to crowd up their criminals in the yards of Newgate, or lock them out of sight, regardless of air and space, in the dungeons of medieval castles that did duty for modern jails. It cannot be said that we grudge our money ; and if we put involuntary penitents through a severe probation, we have been acting to the best of our belief, honestly and in

the interests of society. Personally, one can hardly help sympathising with men whose punishment is aggravated by the pangs of hunger. That aggravation is chiefly owing to the advocates of the lower classes, who have always protested against the injustice of poor ratepayers being taxed to provide luxuries for criminals, who ought not to be better fed than the hard-working mechanic.

No doubt the new system of penal servitude should be profitable both to the prisoners and to society. So long as the prisoners are under strict supervision, it tends directly to the promotion of good conduct. We are told that out of 28,000 prisoners discharged between 1871 and 1885, only about 2000 had failed to earn some remission of their sentences. It may be added that all the men who were discharged had benefited during their seclusion. The uneducated had been put under schoolmasters, and had learned more or less. All, except those who were physically or mentally incapacitated, had been kept to labour suited to them; and those who showed exceptional capacity had been trained in the higher and more lucrative mechanical arts. Indeed the prison authorities are hampered, in the instruction they give, by the complaints that honest handicrafts are handicapped by this subsidised Government competition. Unremunerated labour on cranks and

treadwheels is now only used as an extra punishment. Now the prison labour supplies everything that is needed for the prison service, such as clothing, bedding, printing, cooking, baking, &c. Besides which, there has been a great national gain in employing gangs of able-bodied convicts on important national works. It is possible that the works might have been as cheaply executed otherwise; but the time of the convicts thrown on the hands of the State could not have been more profitably employed. Convicts have been busy over the stupendous breakwaters, docks, wharves, and fortifications at Portland, Portsmouth, and Chatham; in the course of the last two-and-twenty years they have built the prison accommodation for nearly 5000 prisoners; and of 9100 prisoners in custody in July 1882, nearly 4000 were employed in trades, of whom 82 per cent had acquired the knowledge in the prisons. For these figures I am indebted to Sir Edward du Cane, so the remarkable and satisfactory facts are unimpeachable.



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